

LETTERS FROM THE GREAT WAR

"MY DEAREST NANCE"

Pages from the Life of Rev. Richard Cowie:
Army Chaplain (Volunteer) in Egypt and Palestine,
1917-1918

Transcribed and edited by Duncan S. Campbell

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Rev. Richard Cowie: Chaplain to the Forces

PREFACE

Richard ("Dick") Cowie first met his bride-to-be at a Methodist gathering in the Isle of Man in 1901. After a long courtship, he and Annie Watson were married in 1910, and their daughter Kathleen was born the following year. After the onset of World War in 1914, Richard must have felt a strong call to minister to the young men who had entered military service. This urge took shape in 1917, when he requested a year's leave from church duties and enlisted as a volunteer chaplain. His Army assignment took him to the Eastern Mediterranean.

The 85[?] letters in this collection were written during the period that Richard spent away from his family. Being subject to censorship, they do not have the military detail of a private journal. But, instead, there is a broad range of news, including family matters, personal experiences, social contacts, concerts and cinema shows, enthusiastic lectures, well-attended sermons and exuberant descriptions of visits to Cairo and the Holy Land. By contrast, there are reflections on the loneliness of separation and a recurring preoccupation with the delay (or loss) of mail. The series ends with Dick's long-awaited departure from the port of Alexandria. Annie's letters have apparently not been preserved.

Duncan S. Campbell
October 2020

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

VOYAGE

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Boat
20th/4/17.

My dearest,

I know you will be wondering where I am at present. I wish I could tell you. But I wish to assure you that I am quite safe and not so far from you after all. I am falling into things and have no fears about getting along alright. I had a good night last night and was quite ready for breakfast, which was excellent. I have been able to chum up with several C.F.s¹ and the mess is very good. This morning we saw a hospital ship being towed, having been damaged. Lying here within sight of you, it is rather tantalizing — so near and yet so far!! I am hoping, of course, that I shall be able to get this ashore. I am looking forward to a very pleasant voyage — the weather is all that can be desired.

I hope you are feeling better today and will continue to improve. If you don't make progress sufficiently satisfactory, I strongly advise you to have Dr. Simpson. He will no doubt make you alright. Then, when you are quite well, you will be able to have a good time.

I am having a needful rest and I am really enjoying it. The comradeship is also surprisingly pleasant.

It was very exciting to embark². It was just on the time. I have often wondered if the taxi did ever turn up! One poor fellow (C.F.) arrived just when we were moving off. They managed to get him on, though.

Now, don't worry, dearest. There's really no need to. If you worry, it won't help me at all. Then, I am perfectly safe and I feel in perfect keeping.

I think of you and Kathleen very much and am exceedingly pleased to have seen you safely and securely in the company of Kate. Now, goodbye dear. Love to you, K, and all. The chocs are delicious.

Yours ever,
Dick.

¹ Chaplain to the Forces

² Richard had embarked at Plymouth, where his young daughter Kathleen and wife Annie were to spend the coming year lodging with her sister Kate Eccles and family.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Somewhere
April 21st /17

My dearest,

We are still at the same place amidst beautiful surroundings. I have had a very good night. The sunsets for the last two evenings have been glorious. I have not seen anything like it for a very long time, and the weather is all that one can desire. We are faring very well: the food is excellent. I am recovering from my sense of fatigue and weariness quite alright. I hope you are. I want to hear from you to that effect when I reach _____.

Respecting money matters, I sent off papers to the banker yesterday and have asked them to forward to you £10 on the 20th of each month. What you don't require, you can put aside. I am anxious that you should have enough. There is certainly one thing I shall expect you to do — get well attired for the Summer. Then take a good holiday in August. I shall be interested to know what you do about Kathleen's schooling.

If Mr. Viner sends any money on to you, please don't send it on to me. Mr. C. Viner will very likely send equalization money on to you — £1-6-0 at the end of each quarter. That, of course, will be for K's special benefit. Don't send any letters on to me if you can possibly summarize them — except, of course, your own. I wish to have them as long as possible, giving me every bit of news. When you feel strong enough, will you kindly write to the Viners and to Mrs. C. A., asking her for the address of her friends. I never wrote in reply to Mr. Newstead's letter and to thank him for the book. I leave that for my little one to do! I have not written to Father or Sally³. Now you are always with me. I look forward to the future with high hopes.

Love to you both and also to all,
Dick.

P.S. We had morning prayers this morning with a few of the padres. We are arranging a United parade tomorrow.

³ Sally Surtees, aunt of Richard Cowie

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Sunday 21st/4/17

My dearest,

I am scribbling a few lines in the hope of them reaching you before long. We are still comforted by the saying "They also serve who stand and wait". There is nothing very exciting taking place yet. That will probably come later. Last night we had a delightful musical night in the mess room. The O.C.⁴ of the troops is a fine singer. Several did their bit. "The Perfect Day", "The Long, Long Trail" etc. were heartily sung. They are a fine lot of officers, very sociable.

This morning I went to the holy communion service (C. of E.⁵), and at 10 o/c we had a United parade service — the Nonconformists, Presbyterians and Church of England. It lasted just 30 minutes. Tonight, we are having a voluntary service at 5:45. I take the first part of the service. I am wondering how you are today and if you will really be able to get to any service. I suppose Kathleen will go to school. I miss my dear little one and often wish to hear her little prattle. How I miss you too, dearest. But we must both learn to keep a brave heart until the end has come. We shall be amply rewarded if we can exercise patience.

I have done very little reading yet; chats with the men and taking in the beautiful scenery has been filling up my days. When we begin to roll, I suppose we shall find something else to take up our time.

Now I bring my scribble to an end. Kisses for Kathleen and yourself and love to Kate, etc.

Yours affectionately,
Dick.

⁴ Officer Commanding

⁵ Church of England

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

May 3rd, 1917

My dear Nance,

I am writing while a strong gale is blowing. We have not seen much of the blue M_____ as yet. The weather has been stormy since Sunday morning, when we first sighted land, with the exception of Monday. That was a glorious day. For the whole of the day we saw very mountainous country, with interesting looking buildings from the foot of the mountains well up to the peak. The sea was very calm, and often times we could discern people on the shore. Yesterday and today we have not seen any ships at all and were quite at sea. Where we were anchored on Sunday was a very interesting spot. At night time, when all was lighted, it was a very pretty sight to see the lights, well around and halfway up the side of the rock. That I will describe more fully when I come home. I am making notes and will try to give you a full account by and by — now, I cannot mention them. We are expecting to touch land again tomorrow. Whether we shall anchor or not I cannot say. Anyhow, I am hoping to get this to shore for you.

In spite of the gale blowing, I am keeping quite well and am really feeling to be a very good sailor. It is now exactly 2 weeks ago since I boarded this good old ship. We shall all be glad to reach our destiny. It would really be a great pleasure to get ashore to stretch one's legs. In the meantime, we are trying to make life interesting. We had a really good concert on deck two days ago. Songs were the first part, and the second part was a very good farce. There has been boxing for a few nights. Now they are arranging for some sports. We are a very happy lot of men, I can assure you! On Tuesday I had my 2nd inoculation for cholera, and have had no ill effects. I find there are several more inoculations to come. I hope they will be no worse than the last.

I am simply longing to hear from you. It seems so long ago since I left you. I don't expect to receive anything from you for some long time yet, but send me on the news. I will get it by and by, when I land at _____.

I am enclosing you the particulars of John's baptism, so that you might get Wilson⁶ to make out a certificate for you to send it on to Mrs. Jones.

Are you feeling any better now? I do most sincerely hope you are, and that Kathleen is feeling quite happy. Don't worry about me! I am doing a little reading. But I find that the best place to write is not on board a ship. Hope you are all keeping well and having a very happy time.

Now I have tried to tell you all the news permissible. Warmest love to you, Kisses for Kathleen. Yours affectionately, Dick.

⁶ Wilson Eccles, Richard's brother-in-law

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Salonica
[undated]

Dear Nance,

We have had a few days here. I have sent some cards on to you, which I hope you will receive safely. My cable from Malta would no doubt surprise you. I thought, if you were given to anxious thought about my welfare, that a cable would put you to rest. Then, may I also say that I sent a little parcel of lace for you, real Maltese. I registered it, believing that that would enable you to secure it with greater certainty. There is in the parcel a table centre with 6 doilies to match, a collar and 2 yards of lace. I shall be most pleased to hear that this has reached you.

The day in Malta was very interesting. For one night we had to rest in the bay, where the great Apostle⁷ touched land after being shipwrecked. The spot is marked by a monument and the bay is called after him. Early the next morning, we entered the grand harbour of Valletta, where we went ashore. This is a very fine place, with grand buildings and is "beautiful for situation". It was most enjoyable. I saw many veiled women and others with very curious dresses. Two days before reaching Malta we had dirty weather. But from Malta on we had a delightful voyage, especially when we came to the islands.

Just before entering Salonica Bay, we came opposite Mt. Olympus, which was covered with snow. Two nights ago, the lightning was most vivid and wonderful around Olympus. This town looks quite picturesque on approaching it. The ancient city walls can be seen quite distinctly. Fortunately, I was able to go ashore and made the most of the time. A Wesleyan padre and I have become very close friends and we went together. The first thing we did was to walk through the town. The streets are frightfully narrow and the people are quite Eastern in their dress, with many varieties. There are Turks, Jews, Greeks, Cretans, Serbs, Montenegrins, Italians, etc.

The city was especially interesting to me because of its association with St. Paul. We walked through the narrow streets with their bad roads and came to the city wall and went right to the top of it, where we gained a splendid view of the town, bay and the surrounding country. Here I plucked two flowers from the place where the ancient city once was. I send them on to you. I also took a piece of stone belonging to the old wall. I did a little shopping, apart from purchasing postcards. I bought two table centres with the Greek coat of arms, one for you and the other for Kate. These I will keep until the mails are more certain of a sure delivery.

I visited several churches, one the modern building of the Greek Orthodox and the other the ancient building of the Greek Orthodox. The ancient building was for several hundred years built and held by the Greeks; but in 1430, the Turks took possession of it and made

⁷ Saint Paul

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it a mosque, covering all the paintings over with some colouring. This remained so until the 1912 Balkan war, when it returned into Greek hands. This colouring was all removed and the paintings look remarkably well. The Church is called Saint Sophia. We also went to a Roman Catholic church. The walk through the streets and bazaars was most interesting, and the little time here has been interesting. We are once more on the move and approaching Olympus, with a storm around us.

I am eager now to reach my destiny, and will be most glad to get to my work. You and Kathleen are often in my thoughts; I am simply longing to hear from you. I sincerely trust that when I touch land the next time, a large bundle of letters will be waiting for me.

Warmest affection and fondest dreams of you. Kisses for Kathleen.

Yours ever,
Dick.

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May 15th /17

Dearest,

We have just sighted the town. We don't know how soon we shall have to leave the boat. I have just finished packing, and ready anytime to go ashore. The weather is perfect and the sea is like glass. Since I wrote my last letter, everything has gone well. The journey from our last port has been ideal. I often wish that you were here to have the pleasures we have been enjoying. I feel quite rested now and feel ready for anything. It is now rather sad to think of parting from the many friends one has made. But we hope that a kindly hand will keep us and enable us to return together.

Excuse more now my love. A much longer letter, when I write the next time.
Love and kisses.

Yours ever, Dick.

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ALEXANDRIA

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

c/o D.A.G.⁸,
3rd Echelon,
B.E. Force⁹,
Egypt.
May 19th

My dearest,

I expect by now you have received my cable, which will have considerably eased your mind. We landed safely after a very pleasant voyage. It was really most extraordinary! The sea was so beautifully calm with the exception of two days in the Med. It was more like a pleasure cruise. We were all most comfortable on the boat, well looked after in every way. We count ourselves most fortunate to arrive here without meeting any trouble – the menace so many have had to contend with. It was a wonderful experience to be allowed to go ashore at Malta and Salonica, and yet we felt disappointed in not being permitted to go ashore at Gibraltar. Perhaps on the return voyage permission will be granted.

Your letter reached me, dearest, yesterday. I cannot tell you how glad I was to receive it. I was fearing that it had been lost, as some mails have been recently. I am very glad it wasn't, as it has meant so much to me. It seems such a very long time ago since I left you, and have craved to know how you are. The news you send re – Swindon Circuit, Mr. Viner, Rev. Gilbert – I make a note of. I am sorry to hear that your news about Flossie is so unfavourable. The decision about Kathleen's schooling is very good. Really, I believe she ought to be at school now. The fee seems reasonable. I hope she will enjoy it and be able to stand it. It will make it much better for you too, if she does. I am glad she prays for her Daddy! Don't let her forget this work. I can imagine her looking pretty in her new coat and hat. Glad you like the photograph. I am hoping soon now to have one of you and Kathleen.

Now I have had a few days in Alexandria and have had a most enjoyable time. It is a very fine city and we are only a few miles from the centre, with a very good tram service. I have now completed my camp outfit. I need it now as we are under canvas, waiting for orders. I suppose these will come in a few days. The camp is only a few minutes' walk from the sea. Up till now I have not been able to have a bathe. There is plenty of sand and palm tree groves, all around us. I was vaccinated two days ago. Up till now I am alright. In my purchases in Alexandria I have bought a camera. I find it will be invaluable for future work, and will make my account to you and others when I return more interesting. There are some Witney men near. But I have not met them yet. Mr Kyte is near, so I understand. I saw two men of his company. The greatest surprise of all was to me the Rev. Tulip Scott. He is on his way home from Basra. Do you remember him? He knows

⁸ Deputy Adjutant General

⁹ British Expeditionary Force

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Wilson quite well. We have been together quite a great deal and he has helped me in relating his experiences.

Alexandria is a cosmopolitan town, more French Greeks than of any other people. There are the natives, of course, who are of the Arab class. They are much better people to look upon than the natives in Salonica. We have black waiters in our mess. It is all so wonderfully interesting, because so uncommon. Things are rather expensive, and in purchases etc., one is always getting muddled with the coinage. I cannot give you any other address yet, but as soon as I am fixed to my unit I will send on to you. I am hoping to be placed in the region of the Pyramids for a time at least.

Tell Winifred to keep her pecker up. I hope she is already feeling better for her extractions and that she will pass her examinations in the summer. Now, goodbye, my dearest. I am often occupied with happy memories of you and often wish I could see you and all once again. May that come through the ending of the war, very soon. But, at present, I must do all I can for my country, whatever hardness that involves. I am perfectly well and have now got into my drill suit. It is not so hot here as I expected. The sea, being so near, keeps it very pleasant. Now I must end my scribble and send another note soon. Love to you, lots of kisses to my little chick.

Yours most affectionately,
Hubby.

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c/o D.A.G.,
3rd Echelon, E.E.F.¹⁰,
Egypt
22/5/17.

My dearest,

I am longing to hear from you again, and hope before long that the next mail will arrive and bring me a few letters, one of which will be a long one from you. I shall be pleased to see some of the weekly papers — The Leader and British Weekly. At present I seem to be out of touch with the Church news. So, if you can send these out to me, I shall be grateful.

We are still awaiting orders. Mr. Scott is still here and is likely to remain for a few more weeks.

I shall be glad when my orders are through, in order to take up the real work. This will make me feel more content. I took a parade service on Sunday morning at a hospital for the chaplain here. There were 50 men present in a hut attached to the hospital. The men listened well and it was an impressive sight and one I shall never forget. It is my first one as chaplain. I attended the voluntary service in the Y.M.C.A.¹¹ in the evening. I ought to say that I also attended at parade service in the morning at 9:30 and communion after. Sunday was a busy day. I spent a little time in the afternoon on the beach.

On Saturday night, Mr. Kyte and the young man who stayed with Quartermans came to see me. He is looking very well, but of course longs to see Blighty¹² again. He sends kindest regards to you and Kathleen. He was very much interested to hear the Witney news. We had a pleasant time together. Yesterday I saw a man who was postman in Witney. He was looking out for me. His wife had told him that I was on my way to Egypt.

Yesterday I called upon Miss Ransome's cousin. He was very nice. I go there, to his home, to spend an hour or two tonight. I look forward to it very much.

I suppose you have received your first payment from McGrigor's¹³ by now. Hope you are alright in financial matters. I sincerely hope that Mr. Viner has sent you the money due to me by now. I don't want you to feel embarrassed in money matters. I would much rather suffer that than you. If, by any good fortune, you should be able to save a little and it should accumulate to £10, I think it would really be best to send it to York. Don't you think so? I am most anxious that that investment should be raised to the amount it once

¹⁰ Egyptian Expeditionary Force

¹¹ Young Men's Christian Association

¹² Britain or England ("the homeland")

¹³ McGrigor's Bank was payment agent for Army officers' moneys — found insolvent in 1922

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was. It would really be a very satisfactory thing done, if we could manage it. Still we must only do our best.

The life out here is very interesting. It is most amusing to hear the natives raving at each other at the slightest thing. They make a terrible noise. And when together, they chatter most furiously. I saw a travelling barber the other day. There was a native driving his donkey and cart, when the driver pulled up and the barber mounted the cart and began shaving operations at once. It was most curious, as you can quite imagine.

We had a very severe dust or sand storm on Saturday. Everything was covered with sand. It was terrible. My tent was almost blown down, the wind was so strong. The pegs had come loose. I soon set to, made fast the pegs and tightened the cords. For the rest of the night I slept soundly. I find sleeping in a tent very healthy. I wake in the morning feeling quite fresh. Notwithstanding this, I would like to sleep in a "comfy" bed again.

My vaccination has failed to take. I suppose I am immune from smallpox. The nurse said that there was no need for me to be done again. So, I have now got through 3 of my tribulations — ante-typhoid, anti-cholera and anti-smallpox.

I trust Kate and the rest are quite well and that you are all happy together, in spite of limited rations. Warmest love to you my darling and many kisses to my girlie.

Your fondest,
Hubby.

P.S. Six men have just received their marching orders, so mine cannot be long in coming.

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MAHEMDIA

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

36th Stationary Hospital
E.E.F.
24/5/17

Dear Nance,

Since I wrote to you last, things have been moving rather quickly with me. As soon as my last letter was posted I received my orders. I am considerably nearer the front, but still very much out of harm's way. I cannot tell you just where I am, but it's a delightful spot by the sea. I anticipate having a very happy time here. It's a hospital camp, with plenty of facilities for real good work. I am sorry now that I failed to bring my bathing costume. I must have another as soon as possible. I find, on inquiring, that it will be quite safe for me to bathe if I pack my faulty ear with cotton wool. So, I hope soon, by persistency, to learn to swim. When I have acquired the art, you shall know. The mess is good and the men are very nice fellows.

Yesterday I was by the canal. I left Alexandria on the 22nd, and now expect to be here for some little time. I have come to look after the whole of the Nonconformists. On my way yesterday, I took one or two photographs. Of course, it's all desert about me; and, yesterday, I saw several camels with their drivers.

I am simply longing to hear from you again. I am now writing to the D.A.G.'s office, asking for my letters to be forwarded. I do hope that you will write to me frequently. You will be able to get to know what day the mail leaves Plymouth for Egypt. You will see my new address.

How does Kathleen like her new life at school? I do hope that she will be very happy and will be able to get on well. Indeed, I think she will. I am in wonderfully good health at present and, so far as I can see, there is everything here to help me to keep so. It is really a seaside resort. I had a few hours in Port Said yesterday.

Now I must finish my scribble, as there are several things I must see to for the weekend services.

Goodbye! Fondest love to you and kisses to my pet.

Yours ever,
Dick.

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LETTER II

Rev. R. Cowie C.F.
36th Stationary Hospital,
Mahemdiah¹⁴, E.E.F.
28/5/17

My dearest Nance,

I am now much more settled than I was, having got a tent of my own which overlooks the beautiful blue sea. The breeze, which is mostly from the sea, is blowing in upon me now and keeps me nice and cool. The sunshine is continuous and the heat would indeed be very trying, if it were not for our close proximity to the sea. As I write you now, I have on the thinnest of clothing, but no jacket or waistcoat; and today I put on my "shorts" for the first time, which makes one feel much cooler. I am not complaining about the heat at all, only I want you to know that I am enjoying it!!

Your letter of May 6th was received by me yesterday with great pleasure. It was not so very long on the way — only 21 days from the time you wrote it. I thought it would be a pleasant surprise for you to receive my first cable, and also the letter posted at Gibraltar. I expect ere this you have received several other letters, as well as my cable from Alexandria. I am, of course, concerned about the lace I sent from Malta. I hope it will reach you safely. If it does, no doubt you will be able to use it this summer for Kathleen and yourself.

The cutting you sent me was a very good account of the farewell service. I sent a card to Doris Viner from Malta. I shall be pleased to hear from her. I am sorry to learn that Flossie keeps so weak. I am very much interested to hear about Kathleen's schooling. I hope she will be taken in at the half-term. I am very much interested to hear anything about her, and am most amused to learn of her prayers for my sake! However, instinctively, she evidently knows that her Daddy needs to be saved from naughtiness!! Kiss her very hard for me!

I am keeping a diary so that, when I return, we shall be able to go through it together.

The life here is very interesting and pleasant. The Commanding Officer, and also the Matron, are anxious to do all they can to help the padres in their work. I had a meeting of the personnel (R.A.M.C.¹⁵) on Friday night and we decided to form a choir, and also to have a kind of mutual improvement class every week. So, next Friday the choir will meet at 6:30 for practice and the class at 8:30. We have dinner at 7:30. In addition to this, we will have a preaching service on Wednesday at 8:30. The men are very keen. There are 3 padres here — Roman Catholic, Church of England and myself. I minister to all Nonconformists, including Presbyterians.

¹⁴ Spelling variations include Mohamydia

¹⁵ Royal Army Medical Corps

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Yesterday (Sunday) was a very full day. I went to Romani, which is nearly 4 miles away across the desert, for a service at 8am. I went on horseback and managed to stick on although, this morning, I am feeling rather sore. My congregation at Romani was composed of about 50 coloured men (British West Indians). We had a nice service. The singing went well. Then, at 10am, I had to be back for a service in Mahemdiah. We had quite 200 present, including Sisters, patients and personnel. At night I had about 150 for the voluntary service. There's an unwritten rule out here that one should rest during the afternoon. That I did yesterday, and had 40 or more winks.

Going to Romani yesterday, I was interested to see a great deal of wire-entanglements and several dugouts used by the Turks more than a year ago. It was over this part of the country that Mr Percy Jones was for some time. Only a few miles from here, a big and decisive battle was fought when our men pushed back the enemy with great success. I met a lad in the hospital on Friday who knows Mr. Jones quite well.

On Saturday, I had a walk over the desert (Sinai) for 3 or 4 miles and came back by the beach. There are some Roman ruins about 3 miles along the beach. Several of the officers have found Roman coins etc. The mess here is good and the members of it (mostly doctors) are very friendly. We have breakfast at 8 o/c, luncheon at 1 o/c, tea at 4 and dinner at 7:30. The variety of food is very good, considering that we are so far from the main line.

On Thursday last, the Sisters and Matron invited our mess to tea and sports. We had quite a jolly time. Games of various sorts were indulged in. There was a cricket match on Saturday, and now they are arranging for a tennis pitch. I wish I had my racket here. I have had bathing for a few mornings now; my tent is only a minute's walk from the sea. The water is quite warm. This morning I made one or two strokes. I mean to swim!

I intend marking my letters now in Roman figures, so that if any should get astray you will easily know. This one is marked thus: II, as I sent you my first letter from here last week. If you would do the same, dearest, we should then be able to ascertain if any letters are missing. Now, I think I have told you all up to the present. My batman is a very good lad. He is Welsh. He looks after me splendidly.

Write to me as often as you can, my love. I don't think there will be more than one mail a week from England to Egypt but, when you do write, do make it a very long letter. If you are not well enough some weeks to write to me, do see to it that someone writes me a few lines. I am always thinking of you, dearest, and will be most pleased when the time comes for me to return to you. Give my love to Kate and the others. Hope you are having good weather now. Many kisses to my little girlie. I wait for your photos, and will you send me one of myself. Fondest love to you, my dearest.

Your affectionate Hubby.

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P.S. I suppose you have received by now your first cheque from Sir McGrigor's Bank. You ought to have done so by now. Then, Mr. Viner ought also to have forwarded to you the amount owing.

Goodbye again — Dick.

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LETTER III

36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.
5/6/17

My darling Nance,

I am disappointed in not hearing from you last week. Perhaps your letter has gone astray. If so, I sincerely hope it won't be long in finding its rightful owner. For the truth is that I have an increasingly strong desire and need to hear from you. I am very sorry to find that there is only to be a mail to Egypt from England once every two weeks. That's too bad isn't it? I expect the same order will apply to mails leaving here for England. However, I shall be most pleased if you will continue to write me a weekly letter. This would mean me getting 2, once a fortnight, instead of 1, once a week. I hope you are getting all my letters.

Well, I am now getting to grips with my work. The devotional meeting last Wednesday was well attended. The Bible Class on Friday night was quite a success, so far as beginnings are concerned. There was keen interest shown and many questions were asked. The subject was "Paul — Man, Hero and Saint." There were quite 40 present — patients, Sisters and personnel. I have heard of several who are asking for bibles as a result.

I made my journey across the desert again on Sunday morning for service at 8 o/c, and was back here for 10 o/c. My horse did well and is quite reliable. The numbers on Sunday were larger than on the previous Sunday. After the evening service, about 20 remained behind for a sing-song. Last week I didn't feel quite fit. I think the change of climate made me feel "dicky". I am quite alright now and quite enjoy this region of perpetual sunshine and heat. It has been very hot for the last few days.

I went to Port Said yesterday, and enjoyed the day. I wanted a few odds and ends to keep me decent and in order. I also got a few bibles for the patients and personnel. There is not much to see there. I got a few picture postcards, some of which I am sending. The journey is by light railway — 2 hours each way — only a few yards from the beach all the way.

Today we have had a general inspection. The G.O.C.¹⁶ with several other important personages have been present. They stayed for luncheon. To my utter surprise and astonishment, when passing the G.O.C.'s table, he rose and — shook hands with me! I was highly favoured, don't you think? I was the only one to whom he ventured to do this in the mess. It was his respect for the cloth, no doubt! I liked his face and his staff were very amiable. I managed to get a snapshot of him.

¹⁶ General Officer Commanding

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

I wish I could have the British Weekly or Christian World sent to me. I have only had one "Leader" so far. I shall be so grateful if you will ask Wilson to do this for me, and you will kindly pay him the necessary money. Now I must finish to catch the outgoing mail. Hope you are well and that you are all having a happy time.

I have very many thoughts of you and the warmest of love. I am afraid to say too much about this!

Fondest love to you, from yours ever,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER III [repeated]
36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.
June 11th, 1917

My dearest,

I was very pleased to receive your letter dated May 13th. There was a fortnight between this letter and the previous one, although there is only a week difference in the time they were written. I do hope you are getting my letters safely and regularly. I shall be glad when I hear that you have received the lace I sent from Malta. It ought to have reached you by now. The mails are so uncertain now that I am afraid to send any articles to you. At present I am thinking of July 6th and would like to send something to commemorate the date, but it is so unsafe that I think it would be better not to do so. By the time this letter reaches you, it will no doubt be near July 6th. I am sorry I won't be with you then. I wish I could. My thoughts will be turned very much that way then. I hope you will have a happy day!!

I am very pleased to hear of your doings. I often wish I had more books to read here. When in Alexandria I bought "Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians" by E. W. Lane, in the Everyman's. I hope to begin with it today. It is very amusing to hear of that mysterious letter sent to Rev. H. J. Taylor. I am so glad that he has received it. Thanks for writing to Mr. Taylor.

I am afraid you have been misled by the cables. The first one I sent you was from Malta. I was assured that when the cable reached you it would have "Malta" upon it; so, I only wrote "arrived". That was on May 5th; but we didn't reach Alexandria until May 15th when I sent you another cable. My letters will have made this quite clear, I expect. It would really come as a great surprise to you when you received my second cable. However, I thought you would like to know that I had reached Malta safely.

I am interested to know of your work to make Kathleen look nice. I am sure she must look very well indeed in that green material. I am happily surprised to hear that Mrs. Viner has written to you. You are highly honoured. Give Winnie Newstead my love the next time you write to her.

When are you going for your holidays? Do have a very good time. I wish I could join you. Another time perhaps! If I could be with you I would really show you how I can swim. This morning I made 10 strokes. I haven't acquired the art of breathing properly yet, else I feel that I could go much longer. It is such a splendid bathing place here. The beach is all sand — no rocks at all, and the sea is quite warm. It is so glorious to have the cloudless sky and deep blue sea, day after day. Recently, the nights have been very warm with humid air, which is not very pleasant. But there's always a nice breeze from the sea during the day. It is certainly hot, as I found it so yesterday when holding my morning services.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Last night there were several mosquitos active in my tent, but their end was swift and sure.

The services yesterday were well attended, and the singing has greatly improved since we have had a choir. The most of my congregation consists of Presbyterians. The Wednesday and Friday meetings are doing well. The subject for this week is "Does it Matter what a Man Believes?" introduced by one of the men.

One of my young men, a patient, wounded 6 weeks ago in the arm, is having it amputated this morning. It has made me feel quite sad. He is such a nice laddie. It is the only thing to be done to save his life, so he desires it to be done.

Have you received any money yet from McGrigor's? I am feeling anxious about it! I hope Mr C. A. Viner has forwarded the amount due to me.

I hope Wilson had a happy birthday. It was really a good thing that you saw Dr Simpson about K's belt.

Now I have no more news to send, and I must bring my scribble to an end. I am often thinking of you all. Love to Kate and the others. Warmest love and kisses to you and Kathleen.

Yours affectionately,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.
June 18th /17

My dearest,

I was very much disappointed not to receive a letter from you last week. The "Leader" came alright, for which I am very grateful to Wilson. I am wondering why I didn't hear from you. I am so depending upon your letters. There is no one else in the world writing to me, and naturally I feel rather lonely at times between your letters. So dearest, send me all the letters you can and anything — papers etc. — which you think will interest me. I am simply longing to see the British Weekly or Christian World.

I am in the best of health at present, having overcome my disposition to sleepiness. I am enjoying the work here very much. The staff of the hospital — the men in particular — are a great help to me. There are some fine fellows among the patients, but they are not long (when sufficiently well to help in the services), in being sent back to join their unit. Twice a week, men are drafted from the hospital to the base. So, of course, among the patients there is a continual change taking place. Several of the Sisters are very regular and very much devoted to the religious services. One of the Sisters plays the organ for us. She is most reliable. The attendance at the services continues to improve, and — from expressions of opinion made to me — very much enjoyed. One patient came to me last night to say goodbye, as he leaves on Wednesday, and he thanked me for the help I had given to him through my talks. In a conversation I had a few days ago with two of the "dusky sons" from Jamaica, they said that they had received much good from my talk on temptation. The singing goes well in Mahemdia. Each Sunday night, after the usual service — which lasts only 40 minutes — the men remain behind to have a good sing-song. Our Sunday services are held in the Church Army hut at 10am and in the recreation hut at 6pm. During the week: Wednesday, Thursday and Friday at 8:30pm in a marquee. I am sorry that we have to change the place of meetings for our services, and feel assured that we would do even better than we are doing at present, if we had a fixed place. But we take what we can get and try to feel grateful.

There is something for the men in a special way every week. The Matron arranged a Sports Day last Thursday, and the winners in the games received prizes given by the Matron. The Matron is very anxious to do all she can for the patients. On Friday night "The Exiles" — made up of the staff — gave a very good concert.

The Bible Class had for its discussion, last Friday "Does it Matter what a Man Believes?" It was introduced by one of the men, who did very well indeed. The discussion was rather lively and yet very profitable. I am sure you will be interested to know that I give my talks to the men without notes. I wish you could hear me, to say how I get along. I am doing it because you have encouraged me to do so!

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

I wonder how they have got on at Conference, what the Stationing Committee has done with Swindon I and with Witney. In your letter re Mr. Webb's letter about Swindon I for next July, you never said anything as to the arrangements they had made for this year. I am anxious to know. Seeing that the Swindon people are prepared to renew the invitation for July 1918, I feel that I cannot stay here any longer than a year — when my present contract will be completed with the War Office. That would mean returning to England at the end of next April. Of course, if the War should end before then — which to my mind seems very probable — then I may be back in the homeland much sooner. Whilst I am finding much joy in my new work, yet I will not be sorry to be back into circuit work and enjoy our home life once again.

I am enclosing your cheque for £20 to send to York. If perchance your allowances have not yet reached you, well then, by all means, make use of this. But I am anxious that your York investment should be raised to the original figure. I know that this will surprise you, but it may as well be invested as be lying to my credit in the Bank.

On Friday, I had a walk 3 miles from here across the desert and came across a redoubt. It was perfect — well made, and not in the least damaged. From it you can see for miles around. It has its field ambulance dressing station, dugouts, and double wire entanglements right round. I took two snapshots of it and hope they will come out alright. When one remembers that it was August 4th last year when a decisive battle was fought here and now the enemy is at least 120 miles away, we feel sure that something has been done more than merely holding our own on this Front.

Now I must stop. I hope the scribble will interest you, but there seems a great deal about myself in it. Yesterday and Saturday were very hot days. Today there is more breeze and is cooler. This climate would just suit you, and the beach with all its sand would give Kathleen and Clifford¹⁷ plenty of enjoyment. I keep on with horse-riding and feel by the time I have done my foreign service I will have become an efficient horseman.

Don't be long in writing to me, dearest, and kindly ask everybody else to send me letters. It will so cheer me up.

Give my love to Kate and all the others. I will be very pleased to hear from Winifred. Heaps of kisses for Kathleen and fondest love to you.

Yours as ever,
Dick.

¹⁷ Clifford Eccles, Richard's nephew

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER VI

36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.
July 2nd

My dearest,

How very pleased I was to hear from you on Thursday, June 28th. Your letter is dated June 2nd. I presume from what you say that you also wrote to me on May 27th, for the previous letter received was dated May 20th. So, if you did write between these dates, I am afraid that it has been lost. If this is so, I shall be very sorry. Then, I haven't had any "Leader" for 3 weeks. Now I have just heard that an English mail has just been lost. How dreadful! But still, I think the submarine menace is being handled more successfully on the whole.

The weather is very hot here now. One day last week it was 108 in the shade and 122 in the sun. It threatens to be very hot today. If it were not for the sea breeze, it would be very much worse. I have swimming every morning. Yesterday I was in the sea at 6 am. One morning last week I swam quite 100 yards, with only one rest. The first half was by the breast stroke and the second half on my back. What do you think of that dearest? I am now anxious to learn the side stroke and also to dive. I have been out of my depth once or twice. What do you think of my accomplishments? Last week also, on Tuesday, I played my first game of hockey. I was one of the backs. But it is really too violent a game for such warm weather! Of course, it was played at 5:30pm. For several days after I was very stiff. The weather has been so hot at nights for the past fortnight that sleeping has almost been out of the question. It is very necessary to have a blanket over you for the atmosphere at night is generally humid. Then mosquitos and other pests are very active now, especially when you desire sleep most.

In this rainless land, the sunsets are simply glorious. Last night, which is quite typical, from the time that the sun apparently touched the sea to the time it vanished from sight, was only 3 minutes. Then the horizon for 15 minutes was magnificent. All along the skyline, it was like a huge rainbow. The colours were very rich. We have this every night. Then, we are now having beautiful moonlight nights and the moon is very brilliant in a cloudless sky. At midday the sea looks its prettiest. Night and day, we hear the perpetual voice of the sea breaking on the beach.

We had good and helpful services yesterday. A patient sang a solo at the evening service. On Thursday, when visiting the wards, I met a young man who was billeted with the C. A. Viners. He was in the Woodgreen company. We had quite a nice talk together. He came to both services yesterday. He showed me photographs of Mrs. Viner, Doris and Floss and also of Doris and Mabel Crowther. He had not heard of Mabel's death nor of Flossie's illness. By the way, how is Flossie now? Is there any more hope of her recovery? I suppose she is still in Southsea.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

I am expecting my Senior Chaplain coming to see me either today or tomorrow. I have not yet met him.

Although the Y.M.C.A. has no tent or hut here yet, they (the authorities) have been very kind to me. They are providing me with hymn books and stationery for the men. They are now sending me an organ. Although we already have one in the hospital, chiefly used in the Church Army hut, yet they are sending me one from Cairo for use among my boys. Unfortunately, the Sister who has been our organist since I came here, has now left for England. Yesterday I persuaded another Sister to take her place. I hope that she will continue.

I have been taking a few more snapshots, a sample of which I enclose. You will remember in my letter of last week that I told you of my walk to Polusium, the remains of an old Roman town. Here are two snapshots. The figure is Captain Kidd R.A.M.C. He attends our services. The train with men going back to their battalions is just a little spoiled.

I hope Winifred will come through her exams with flying colours. I am delighted to hear of Kathleen taking part in an action song. I hope she did her part alright. It is pleasing to hear that she is recovering from her cold and is looking better. I miss my little girl very much!

I was very much amused to hear of Mr Syme's "turning up" again. Tell Wilson to be careful. The last time he wrote to me, you remember, was about 2 years ago, asking for the loan of money.

How very kind of Annie Marsland to say such nice things about me. You can be assured my dearest, that I am enjoying my work among the men. Several have come to me, wishful for me to help them in spiritual things. Others have assured me of the help received. I have men in my tent most nights and we have very good talks together.

How I long to see you again. I cannot tell you how much I miss you, dearest. I am hopeful that the war will be over before Xmas; then I shall come back to you as quickly as I can. It would be very nice for us to have Xmas together. However, I must possess my soul with patience.

Hard kisses for Kathleen and Warmest love to you.

Your fond old Hubby.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER VII

36th Stationary Hospital,

E.E.F.

July 6th 1917

My Darling,

Your letters of June 14th and 17th have just been received. They have given me a great deal of pleasure. They are so packed with interesting news. Along with yours, there was also one from Ethel. It was a very cheerful letter and she is very happy with her children. They are visiting Newcastle for their holidays. Tom will be able to spend a fortnight with them. She hopes to spend a week with Sally and Grandmother. She is asking if she might send me a parcel. I hope to write to her in a few days and will tell her that I do not really need anything sending, as we have ample food supplies. By the way, how do you manage for foodstuffs now? I hope you are as well supplied as we are.

What a batch of letters and cards you had from me! I am glad the little ones enjoyed the cards. I will try to send a few more for them. I should like to have seen Kathleen taking her part in the anniversary services. I am glad Winifred has passed the medical test A1 and sincerely trust that she will pass as successfully her Oxford Exam and win the bursary. I am also glad that you have had further advice from Dr. Simpson about your gums and lips. I hope you will not delay in visiting the dentist.

Now, what a heap of money you will have all at once! I presume the bank sent you a cheque for £10. Of course, you ought to have your second month's allowance by now. But, no doubt, that will be sent on to you regularly after the first allowance. Strangely enough, I wrote to the bankers only yesterday about the matter, because I was feeling rather concerned about it. Then, how very generous of Mr, Viner and the Witney Circuit to send so much! I really expected no more than £7. However, you know where it will keep safely. I will write to Mr, C. A. V. in a few days. Then, I expect my cheque for £20 will have reached you by now. It was sent on June 16th. I hope you will take plenty of money with you and have a really good holiday; you must remember that you have not really had a decent summer holiday for two years. I should like to join you and we would have some good times together!!

So, Mr Adye and Mr Baseve have joined up! What a great change in all our homes! I hope The War will soon come to an end and we can all return to our loved ones!

Respecting the Equalization Fund money, I have asked Mr. Viner to send that to you each quarter.

Your outings to Lea Moor and the Sports must have been a very nice change. We had a Sports Day here yesterday for the patients. There is also a tennis tournament in progress.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

On Monday there will also be a cricket match between the officers of this hospital and the hospital of Port Said. They play here.

On Wednesday we had an eclipse of the moon. It was very interesting to watch. It took an hour to accomplish and several of us watched the whole process. Then when the eclipse was complete, a dark orange colour covered the face of the moon. It was very interesting.

My duties during the last few days have been of the ordinary kind. There are not many patients in the hospital now. But there may be an influx any day. I wrote to Mr. C. Viner and the Rev. Phillipson on Tuesday. Today the event of importance among the officers was the departure of one of the staff (M.O.¹⁸) for England. His contract is finished and he is over military age. Tell it not in Goth!¹⁹ We all paraded (for fun) in our sleeping suits at 6:30 to see him off and bid him bon voyage.

I hope to be able to meet the Rev Spray. I will get to know where he is on Monday when I meet my Senior Chaplain in Port Said.

Then, the most important event this week, which is really today, is the anniversary of our wedding day. That day comes back to me with very pleasant memories. I have thought of it a great deal today. Lt. Ainscow joined me after lunch today in my tent, with a cup of café-au-lait. My batman was also of the company. 7 years ago, today! The only regret is that I am not with you now. I shall also have occasion to remember The War — because it has robbed me of these months of life with you. But, no doubt it will be made up to us in the end. I wonder what you are doing today? My heart goes out to you.

Lt. Ainscow is an R.A.M.C.²⁰ officer, an excellent surgeon. He left his practice in Wigan to join the Army. He and I have become very friendly. He is an Anglican (evangelical), exactly like Mr. Newstead in his views on church matters. His wife is now living in Cirencester with her people. He has 2 children, the youngest was born 3 weeks ago. He is a very nice fellow. He knows Witney District very well. So, you see we have much in common. Really, he is the only officer I can have any comradeship with.

Well now, I must bring my scribble to an end. There is no more news. I am enclosing a few cards for the children. Is Stella²¹ still intending joining you for your holidays?

Goodbye, my dearest, for a few more days, then I will try to write you again. I am very much cheered by your letters today. Write to me as often as you can and tell me about everything that happens in your life. When I am lonely, I read the old letters and that helps me. Love to Kate and the others.

¹⁸ Medical Orderly

¹⁹ "Don't publicize this."

²⁰ Royal Army Medical Corps

²¹ Stella Howchin, former school companion of Kate Watson

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Warmest affection and kisses for you and Kathleen, Hubbie.

LETTER VIII
36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.
July 10th, 1917

My dearest,

I am writing you a few lines again to let you know that I am still well and active. It is so recent since I wrote you a fairly long letter that there is really nothing fresh to talk about. I have been most fortunate with the mails for the past few days. Yesterday I received a letter from Father²² and Doris Viner, 4 Leaders and a British Weekly from Wilson. Then I have also heard from Winifred. I will write to her soon. So, you can imagine that I have had interesting days recently.

Doris Viner says that she has been doing housekeeping while her mother was at Southsea with Flossie. Mrs. Viner thinks that Flossie is a trifle better, she was much more interested in things and people. She also has sent me 2 photos of herself and 3 others in the bathing-place.

Father tells me in his letter that my brother Nichol has now a son and heir. That was really all the news from home.

The services on Sunday went very well and there were large attendances. Only, in the morning it was very hot. Once last week it was 109 in the shade. You can possibly imagine what that was like. Still, although I sometimes perspire freely, I am enjoying it immensely. I am sure you would too, especially beside this lovely sea.

Yesterday I went to Port Said with the special purpose of meeting my Senior who was coming from Cairo, but for some reason or other he failed to "turn up". Still I had a fairly interesting day and made several purchases. I got something for your birthday. It will soon be here now. I will send it in a few days, and one or two other little things. I want Kathleen to give you a blouse or a blouse length, very good quality, as her gift to you. Other purchases yesterday consisted of tooth powder, soap etc.

When I got back and had a cup of tea, I had a delightful swim for 15 minutes. That just put me in splendid form for dinner at 7:30. I was in the sea again this morning at 7 o/c, when I got along better than ever and soon covered 100 yards. Assure Winifred²³ that I will not attempt to swim the Mediterranean yet because, if I collided with a submarine or one of its torpedoes, I might do damage and be court-martialled. So, please don't expect

²² Edward Cowie, Richard's father

²³ Winifred Eccles, Ricard's niece

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

me so long as these submarines are about. Today there is a big cricket match between this hospital and the 31st General, Port Said.

I received a box of soldier's comforts last week from the Baptist Women's League, consisting of shirts, socks etc. and also about 30 books. The men are highly delighted with them.

Well. I have no more news to send you now. I look forward to your next letter. This week I must write several letters in reply for what I have received.

Hope you are all keeping well. I am often thinking of you and anticipate the time when we shall be enjoying our home life once again. I am not able to get any films for my camera, and so I am not able to take any more snapshots for a few days. I am enclosing a few postcards for the wee ones.

Love to you all and thanks to Wilson for the papers. My fondest love and kisses to you and Kathleen.

Yours ever,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER IX

36th Stationary Hospital,

E.E.F.

11/7/17

My dearest,

I hope you won't get tired of hearing from me. I received another letter from you yesterday and I write today as an expression of my gratitude, notwithstanding the letter I wrote you yesterday. Perhaps this note will overtake the one sent 24 hours ago. I also heard from Sally yesterday.

I see it has only taken your last letter 15 days to reach me, so your news is fairly recent. Thanks for the photo. One or two here think it very good. If you have one to spare, I know that Ted will be pleased to receive one. I am also very pleased that your allowance is being sent to you regularly now. What about the cheque for £20 I sent to you? Has it reached you yet?

I was interested to hear about the wedding you attended, and also your playing at the services. It is nice to know that the Witney people think of us. I am afraid that Gladys Quarterman is in a very bad way. It makes me very sad to think of her.

The news about the Conference is very interesting. I suppose the Mr. Pritchard put down for Witney is the Rev. E. E. Pritchard's brother. I am very glad that a young man has been stationed there. The information about Swindon is important, and now I wonder what the final arrangement will be. It must have been a very difficult matter for the Stationing Committee this year, seeing that so many ministers have been appointed as chaplains. I see by the Leader that you were among the company to bid bon voyage to Rev. and Mrs. Ayre and Rev. and Mrs. Kerswell. I hope they have arrived safely.

You are anxious to know how we fare for meals here. Really, we do very well. There are 26 of us in the mess and, in addition to our rations, we have additions at our own expense. 8 o/c Breakfast — always porridge, bacon and eggs, or bacon and sausage or bacon and tomatoes, bread, butter and marmalade. Luncheon is at 1 o/c — Beef roast or minced, or Rabbit (just recently) or Bully Beef²⁴ — with potatoes, French beans or peas with Yorkshire pudding, sometimes. Then, tinned fruit or rice pudding or pancake. Tea at 4 o/c, bread, butter and jam with a little cake. Dinner at 7:30pm, Soup, the other courses much the same as at luncheon, with the addition of melons and a cup of coffee (Egyptian). So, don't you think we fare well? It is cooked very well too.

As to carrying on my work among the men, my chief work really is among the permanent staff. The patients are usually here only for a few weeks, and then gone again. This is

²⁴ Corned beef

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

really now a convalescent hospital and so the patients stay for shorter periods. At present there are very few patients. But I visit the patients in their wards and always find them ready to talk with me. I also enter into their games with them. Several have come to my tent to see me. The R.A.M.C. men come to see me very often. Most days, I have someone in to see me. Yesterday one young man came to see me to have a talk upon the book of Guy Thorne's "When it was Dark." I read it in order to talk with him upon it.

I am sure there's a good work being done. Our meetings are so well attended and the interest is so keen, especially at the Bible Class on Friday nights. The subject next meeting is upon "Friendship." I never before realised the power of hymn-singing. Each Sunday night the men, in increasing numbers, remain after the ordinary service, to sing their favourite hymns. It is a real means of grace. The hymn that went best last Sunday night was "I will follow Jesus."

We are just in a little difficulty now about an organist. One, I told you, has left for England. The Sister who took her place goes on night duty tomorrow, which is usually for a few months. No doubt we shall get someone else. You had better come and join me. Do you think you would like it, dearest? I certainly would! For such a work as this, no doubt you would be able to secure your passport.

I often wish I had more of my books handy. I miss them very much now. Pleased that the dentist has done his work so well for you. I had to go to him this morning. My plate has split again. It's a nuisance, is it not!

Now I must put the closure on, else I shall be wearying you. I am delighted to hear that my chick has been "Wery good girl all day". Give her some hard kisses from me, and ask her to kiss you for me.

Warmest love,
Dick.

P.S. I am quite fit.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER XI

36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.

July 23rd, 1917

My darling Nance,

I was very pleased indeed to receive your letter dated July 1st. last Friday. I had been a fortnight without news from you, and your letter was most welcome. I expect there are now two or three more on the way. Kate's letter came at the same time, with which I was delighted. I will try to reply to Kate's letter in a few days.

How unfortunate that you are having such wet weather. I am sorry because it hinders you and Kathleen taking your walks. We have no such troubles here. The only difference is, perhaps, that one day happens to be hotter than another, or one day we have a dry heat and another day, by way of a change, we have a damp heat. Yesterday we had a change by way of a damp heat. It was really very trying. I had to change my clothes three times because of the perspiration. Today is better again, but hotter!! Phew!!

What a series of catastrophes Kathleen has been having. I hope her bruises have quite gone. She mustn't keep them until I come home. I hope she will take pleasure in games, like Winifred. Did you go to the "Mothers at Home" in Baby Week? It must have been interesting, if noisy. Then Rev. T. Bates has gone to Brinkworth and Mr Pope to Swindon!! Mr. Bates has got a very good circuit to begin with, and most fortunate with his first house. Do you remember it?

How sad for Mrs. Harrison! and especially for her sister Edna. Oh, the terrible blighting effect of this War.

I hope Kathleen has sufficiently recovered from her bruises now to be able to have her photo taken. I am patiently waiting for it.

There are always other officers bathing when I go in. I have now got into the way of breathing naturally when swimming, and it makes it much easier. The only thing now is that the palm of the hand gets tired. I am now able to turn in the water from the breast stroke to the back stroke and vice versa. I have about 30 minutes in the sea each morning. I am wondering if you will do any bathing at Perranporth²⁵. I expect Kathleen will.

I really have no news for you this week. The only thing is that we have been busier, because the number in the hospital has largely increased — men falling sick etc. The personnel gave a musical sketch on Saturday night entitled "Impossible". It was really good for a local composition. They repeated it tonight for the patients. The patients also

²⁵ Seaside resort town in Cornwall

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

gave a concert last Friday. There is always something taking place, which makes life interesting. I see a mail has been lost at sea, posted here on June 27, 28. I don't think any of my letters could have been on that boat.

I heard from Mr and Mrs Buckingham, New Yatt Road, last week. They are all well. I think I told you that I had received a letter from Mr Percy Jones, and that Mr Shepherd is now in Egypt. I wrote to both of them last week.

I suppose, when this scribble reaches you, you will be on holiday. I hope you will have a really good time and, at the end of it, all of you will return to Plymouth feeling quite strong and ready for the Winter. I will possibly be with you next year.

I see Rev. T. Mayland has gone to Guernsey. I hope he will do well. He can, if he will try. We were in College together. He will certainly be a great change from Mr Jeffs.

The week's papers that were missing have turned up. They were addressed 26th Stationary Hospital, and were thus delayed a few days. It was interesting to have the Conference news, what there was of it.

I hope, dearest, that you are taking every care of yourself. I think it would be a wise thing if you took a tonic now and again to keep up your strength. You must keep well while I am away and I shall expect to find you quite strong when I return.

I have nothing more to say now. I could say much, of course, about my love for you. Suffice it for me to say that that is stronger than ever, and that I look forward to the time when I shall see you again.

Fondest love to you and kisses for Kathleen.

Yours affectionately,
Hubbie.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.
30/7/17

My dearest,

I am anxiously waiting to hear from you again. We have had no English mail for nearly a fortnight now. Very likely we shall have something very soon. It is surprising what a wonderful difference it makes to the temper of the whole hospital to have a large mail from home. It makes us all more amiable, and here I speak for myself.

During the last week, the weather has not been quite so hot. We expect to have passed through the worst time so far as heat goes. Early mornings and evenings are very pleasant times.

Yesterday we had very helpful services. At the evening service I sang to the men: "Behold Me standing at the Door." My text was "Come unto Me etc." There was a large congregation. On Friday I gave my first talk on "The Parables" at the Bible Class. Every alternate week I will take up this subject. Next Wednesday, I begin a series of talks on the gospel according to St. Mark. I find the men prefer talks of this nature and so, I am prepared to have the increased work to help them the more. It also saves me from sluggish ways in my studies. I often long for my books.

Last Thursday, I went to my camp across the desert and met the men and officers. I had tea with them. I also went on Friday to their Sports, which was great fun. About 12 officers went from here. The greatest game was bare-backed wrestling on mules. To see the faces of those niggers as they went for each other with set teeth and fierce looking eyes; and also, the excited spectators of 600 black men with high-pitched voices helping on their comrades was most amusing and interesting. I took one or two snapshots. If they turn out alright, I will send you a sample. The band race was also great fun. Each man had to play his instrument, and the drummer his drum, as they ran. It was a terrible din!! The drummer won.

I heard from Mr. Shepherd on Saturday. He tried to get to see me before going up The Line, but he couldn't find me. He is well and likes this country better than the one he left. I suppose Mr. Viner has been unwell. He has nicely recovered. He also tells me that Flossie has been moved to Littleworth (to her uncle Archie's, near Farringdon). So, she must be mending a little. It will also be much better for Mr. and Mrs. Viner, and no doubt a better thing for Flossie, because it is beautiful country and stands fairly high.

I am going to Port Said tomorrow. My watch is there for repairs and I must have it. Watches soon go wrong here. Then, owing to alterations of travel, it will almost be impossible to go there after tomorrow.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

I wrote a few lines to Kate on Saturday. I hope you are still receiving my letters safely. I heard yesterday that the boat I travelled with has recently been sunk, or at least torpedoed. But my source of information is not very reliable. I sincerely hope it is not so. She was such a fine boat and we had such a happy time on her.

I am sending a few "P.M.²⁶ Leaders" on to Mr. Shepherd. He is anxious to know how the Conference passed off. We make good use of the papers out here.

How is the money sent by McGrigor's each month serving your purposes? Does it meet all your needs? I shall be very glad to know, dearest. How much have you been able to send to York? I have thought of it several times and have forgotten to mention it until now: how nice it would be if the Equalization Fund money each quarter was put into the War Loan for Kathleen. What do you think of it my dearest? Did you receive my cheque I sent for you? I cannot remember you ever saying so. It is important that I should know.

I see that you are to have cheaper bread and meat. How are you really managing with things generally? Hope you and Kathleen are keeping well, and that you are now comfortably stout!! I have never felt better, but I am always sleepy! I often picture you all together and often wish I could be with you. But the time is going, and ere long I will be back again. Look out for important events here soon. I should really like to be more in the midst of things, but then I am doing my bit here.

Love to you all. Kisses for my little girl and warmest affection to you from

Your fond Hubbie.

²⁶ Primitive Methodist

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER XIII

36th Stationary Hospital,

E.E.F.

August 3rd, 1917

My dearest,

I was very glad to receive your letter yesterday, dated July 8th. Up to the present, I have received all your letters. But it is a fortnight since we had an English mail. Maybe we shall have several, following quickly after each other now. I don't remember numbering my last letter to you, sent on Monday, July 30th. It was the XIIth. Your last letter is a nice lengthy one, and I now always picture you on Sundays writing to me. It is very good of you to write me when you are not feeling well. There are a great many mails being lost at sea at present, and I am glad that I have not sent you the things I have for you. It is too perilous. Glad you got the cheque and it is now at York.

I note what you say about Swindon and Mr. Pope. By yesterday's mail I also received a letter from Mr. Webb, Circuit Steward of Swindon I. He sent on the resolution of Conference which is: "That the request of the Swindon I Circuit for a year's supply in order that Richard Cowie, who has become an Army Chaplain, should take the position of Superintendent in 1918 cannot be entertained. Ministers are engaged as Army Chaplains on the distinct understanding that this cancels their Circuit engagements, and though they are assured of a Station on their return to Circuit work, places to which they have been invited cannot be kept open for them." So, you see the prospect of going to Swindon when I return is wiped out. I very much regret this and think that the Conference ought to have complied with the Circuit's wish, as they have done in other cases. However, it will all come right in the end and we must leave it.

I am much interested to hear of the possibility of Wilson returning to Lymm. I can quite understand Kate and Wilson being desirous of returning to the North. If they decide to return, I hope it will be alright for Kate. What do you think, dearest?

I think your new coat and skirt and blouse a very good choice. It is my favourite colour for you. But I am sorry that you let yourself get so shabby! You mustn't do that again. You must not forget that you are not only a minister's wife, but that your husband is a Captain in the Army, and you must keep up appearances. Don't be shabby anymore! I can see, you really need me to keep you in order!! What about your boots, stockings etc. etc.!! Really, I should like to see you in your new things, and I expect next Sunday in Perranporth you will be quite a swagger! Ahem!!

So, you are now at Perranporth. I imagine you all by the sea, facing the broad Atlantic. I am also by the sea, looking the same way, but facing the blue Mediterranean. I hope you will have a very happy time. Trust Stella is able to be with you. I look forward to the letter

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

which will give me full particulars about the holiday. Better if I could have been with you.

It will remind you of old times to have Gertie Barnett near you. Glad to hear that Reg. Viner has got his commission. I am sorry to hear that Wilfred Townsend has been ill with spotted fever²⁷. How very sad. Poor Mrs. Townsend! I hope her son won't be left an invalid. It's such a terrible fever! I will try to write to her shortly. Have you heard that Mrs. Gentle has passed away?

I heard from "printer" Riddick yesterday, of Bournemouth. They are quite well and wish to be remembered to you and Kathleen. I don't know how they got my address. By the way, there is no need to put "Mahemdia" on my letters; 36th Stationary Hosp. E.E.F. is quite enough.

I spent Tuesday in Port Said, but I have nothing exciting to relate. I was really glad to get back to camp. Yesterday I was on the sick list. I had rather a bad bilious²⁸ bout. I remained quiet and starved myself. Today I am feeling much better. My friend Lt. Ainscow is looking after me and I feel sure that I will soon be fitter than ever.

Really, I don't think Wilson is having very good treatment from the Reverends Horton and Davison. I hope he was able to secure the exchange with Mr. Denner and the Lay Agent at Liskeard. That would certainly be better than having Mr. Denner who has set everybody by the ears²⁹.

Well now, I must put on the closure. I am taking the Bible Class tonight, then there are three services on Sunday. Hope I shall hear from you again soon. Glad Kathleen's bruises are almost better. I will write to Clifford soon. Love to you all. Kisses to my little pet. Dearest love to you my darling.

Yours affectionately,
Dick.

²⁷ Bacterial disease spread by the bite of an infected tick.

²⁸ Nauseous

²⁹ To cause persons to engage in a squabble or dispute

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER XIV

36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.

August 8th, 1917

My dearest,

I heard from you again the same day I wrote my last letter. I was pleased to hear from you twice last week. Very likely, I won't hear from you at all this week. I usually write my weekly epistle on Monday morning, but yesterday I had to go to Port Said to claim the organ sent for our use by the Y.M.C.A. (Cairo). It had been there for a month and I could not find it anywhere. When I finished this business about the organ I looked at the shops, and was greatly tempted to buy many things. But I think it will be best not to buy anything more until near the time for me to leave for England. I walked along the pier and watched the ships passing in and out, and also found interest in the boys fishing. But I was glad to get back to my tent for, really, one soon gets tired of Port Said.

We had a good day on Sunday. I had my first funeral this morning. It was at 5:30, just at sunrise. The poor fellow was severely burnt in a fire which destroyed a Y.M.C.A. hut a few miles away on Sunday afternoon. He passed away at 1 o'clock the next morning. He was a very nice man and was a widower with one or two children. I have written a letter of sympathy to his mother this morning.

I hope Wilson has got to the end of his troubles about his colleagues. I think I had better request being stationed there. How would you like that? What part of the country would you like to go to when I resume circuit work? I expect Wilson has been able to decide about the Lymm invitation by now.

I am expecting a visit from the Rev. E. de J. Horne in a few days. He is having a few days' leave to Cairo. It will be quite nice to see him again. We shall be able to renew our college days once again.

I have had a very busy time this morning. A great many official letters have had to be written, and it is now very near luncheon time.

I am surprised to hear of your joining the Coburg Str. Choir³⁰. Are you feeling as fit as all that? I do ask of you not to place too great a tax on yourself. I am just afraid of your disposition outrunning your discretion. You'll be careful, dearest, won't you? I know you!!

I was very pleased to receive "Public Opinion". I have not received any "Leaders" or "British Weeklies" for 3 weeks now. They have possibly been lost. I am writing a little

³⁰ In Plymouth

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

letter to Clifford. I am enjoying "The Lightning Conductor", a novel written by C.N. and A.M. Williamson. It describes travelling experiences in France and it is certainly worth reading.

I hope you are all having an enjoyable time by the sea. I am feeling well again after my nasty bout last week. I will wait for your letters written from Perranporth, giving me full accounts of everything, with much joy.

When you send me the photograph of yourself and Kathleen, I shall be able to see if Kathleen is growing and if you are stouter. It should be here soon.

Well my darling, write to me soon. You are always in my thoughts. Lots of kisses for Kathleen and a great heap of love for yourself.

Your fond hubbie,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER XV

36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.

August 13th, 1917

My darling Nance,

I am writing to you this morning, but I really have no news to send you. I have tried to describe my life day by day, as I live it here; and also told you about the place and people so often and so fully that, this morning, I am at a loss to know what to say. So, if I do nothing else but chatter, you will understand.

I may say that the weather still keeps very hot, and each day we continue to have the perpetual sunshine. Before coming here, I could not believe that it was possible to have such a long spell of glorious weather. I am now enjoying the direct opposite kind of weather that we had up to my departure from England. We are likely to have a few more months of it. The only difference we have is that one day happens to be hotter than another, or that we have a little more breeze. I sometimes wonder what will become of us during the Winter, when we have a stormy sea. We are so near the beach, and level with the sea, that if we remain as we are, we will be swamped, unless we build a fairly high sea-wall made of sandbags. The hospital is so large that it would be quite a big business to move back onto higher level. If we have to move, we will possibly go up The Line, either on to the Frontier or into Palestine. Your map will show you the town I mean. A great deal, no doubt, will depend on the next "stunt". Nothing would please me more if it is made possible for us to go to the Holy City. Here perhaps I am anticipating too much.

I was very much disappointed that I didn't receive a letter from you yesterday, my dear. We had an English mail, in which I received two lots of papers. Christian World and Leader from Wilson, and two letters from the bankers. But none from you, alas! Possibly, your letters will come today, for it often happens that a mail from England spreads over two and sometimes three days. So, I have not given up hope yet.

Last Thursday I went to Romani, on "Bessie"³¹, to make arrangements for my Sunday service there. I told you in my last letter about the Y.M.C.A. hut being burnt down. I saw the Church of England padre, and he was most obliging, and placed at my disposal his garrison church for the service. So, I held my service in the Romani church on the invitation of the padre. I wish we could have such things taking place at home. Of course, in this Hospital I hold all my Sunday morning services in the church hut. I often wonder how these young clergymen will act towards the Free Churches when they return to their parishes. Out here they realise that we are not heathens after all.

³¹ Pony for riding

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Last Wednesday, we had 20 present for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. On Friday I gave my second talk on the Parables. My first talk of a fortnight ago was introductory. Then I divided the Parables of our Lord into five types:

- 1 Parables of the Kingdom, such as the Sower of Tares etc Matt. XIII.
- 2 Parables of Grace (Luke XV) etc.
- 3 Parables of Prayer — Friend at Midnight and The Unjust Judge.
- 4 Parables of Character and Service — The Good Samaritan etc.
- 5 Parables of Judgment — Barren Fig Tree etc.

On Friday night we studied in detail the parable of the Tares. There was a large attendance and the subject was freely discussed. The men enjoy these meetings and I always guard against the meeting becoming a debating class. I am constantly having men coming to me for bibles and testaments. This is very encouraging, for I know the Word will do its own good work. On Wednesday I give my second talk on the Gospel of St. Mark. Really, I find that there is much more need for hard study here than I ever had at home; because of this, I often wish I had my library. I cannot think for a moment that my labour is being spent for nought.

I am glad, dearest, that your prayers are constant for my work among the men. This confidence helps me more than I can tell you.

How are Winnie Gerrard³² and Winnie Newstead keeping? Any news about your old friends will be most welcome. I hope you are all having a jolly time by the sea and have all got well-tanned with the sun. I often wonder what colour I shall be when I return.

Yesterday I went to have tea with the Sisters and had an enjoyable hour. We are fortunate in having the Sisters. There are none any further up The Line than this. They certainly help us to keep in touch with civilization.

What else shall I say? Oh, I know one thing more! I have begun to read "Barabbas" by Marie Corelli.

I sincerely trust you will have a very happy birthday on the 21st, and that Winifred will do as I suggested about Kathleen's and my present for you.

Love to all. Kisses to my pet and warmest and fondest love to my darling.

Yours ever, Dick.

P.S. I have just received your letter of the 22nd July. I will write you again soon. Dick.

³² Winifred Gerrard, young friend of the Watson family

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER XVI

36th Stationary Hospital,

E.E.F.

August 14th, 1917

My Dearest,

I was very pleased to get your letter yesterday, which was written on July 22nd. I am very sorry you have not received my letters. They have possibly been lost at sea; or let us hope that they will appear after many days. During the last six weeks I have several times written two letters a week, which were all more or less lengthy and described my life here in more complete detail. However, if they are lost, I must give you the information again some other time. You will soon be able to find out, if you compare the numbers of the letters, how many, if any, have been lost.

So far as I am able to ascertain, all your letters have reached me since you began to number them. I think there was one lost between June 2 and 14; also, between May 20 and June 2. So, if you happen to have mentioned anything of special importance about then, you will quite understand. So, if there is anything you were particularly anxious I should know, perhaps you can recollect and I will be glad if you would repeat. I have all the dates upon which I wrote to you; so, if you wish anytime to send me the dates of my letters I will be able to correct. In view of so much going astray or being lost, I am very glad that I did not send my parcel for you as I once intended.

I am very sorry your back has been causing you trouble. I sincerely hope that you are quite free from that by now. Somehow, I cannot help but question the wisdom, dearest, of you joining the Choir. I think it will prove too much for you. What do you think yourself, really? Did Kate agree with your decision?

I am glad that you received 5/- from Rev. G. Bennett. You say that you have put into the "stores". I cannot understand what you mean by "stores". Will you kindly explain, dearie? I see from the bank book, just to hand, that you are now receiving your cheque about the 20th of each month. But I have not yet heard if the amount sent to you is sufficient. Will you kindly say! I presume it is, else you would not have sent the £20 to York. However, I shall be glad to be assured on this point.

Glad you all, including Kathleen, had such a good time at the Sunday School Treat. I expect by this time Clifford has received my letter to him. How sad to hear of Gertie Barnett!! Poor girl, she has been a great sufferer! I sincerely hope the stay in the South will do her good.

I expect Winifred is greatly relieved if she has passed her Exams. I hope she has nicely recovered from the strain.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Have you been able to find out anything further about Kathleen's school? I hope she is able to start there soon after she returns from her holidays. It needs a great deal of effort to imagine her going to school.

I am very sorry to read the telegram today about Mr Henderson's resignation from the Government. I don't like the symptom. What do you all think about it at home? These constant changes and differences in the Cabinet must make it very trying for the Premier and very hard for him to "carry on". However, I cannot help but believe that the end is not very far away. Of course, I speak comparatively.

The note in the Leader surprised me. I wrote to Mr. Horton about a week after I had been attached to this unit. I really couldn't do it before then. Mr. Gilbert's note was certainly based on War Office information, as the address he puts there signifies. The address is wrong but, of course, it would find me. The correct address is what I give you, 36th Stationary Hospital, E.E.F. That, and nothing more, is ample. I will try to write Gilbert in a few days.

I am wonderfully fit now. Really, I never felt better. But in another week or two I think I will be inoculated again against typhoid. Then that will serve until I return home in the Spring.

Now I have nothing more to say. I too will be glad when The War has finished and I am back to England with you once again. But may I say that one third of the year has already gone, for it will be four months next Sunday since I embarked. I am always wanting you my darling and will be most thankful to have home-life once again. Love to you all; a big hug and kisses for my pet and warmest and tenderest affection to you.

Yours ever,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER XVII

36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.

August 20th, 1917

My Dearest,

I am wondering where you are at present — in Plymouth or Perranporth. You did not tell me how long your stay would be in Perranporth, so I cannot correctly picture you spending your birthday tomorrow. Wherever you are, I sincerely trust that you will have a very happy day. You can be assured that my thoughts will be with you very much. My great regret is that I cannot be with you as in years past, to help to make you feel happier. But, in spirit, I will give you the same greeting, as soon as I awake.

Four months today, I was resting on the ship in the Sound, often wondering if you were on the Hoe, gazing at the boat. Then we left our resting place on the Sunday night for the open sea, where we were for 7 days. That all seems ages ago now. And I shall be glad to be within sight of the old country once more, and specially to see you and all at Hilworth. I have often wondered if you had any idea that we were so near to land for the first 3 days!

I hope you have received letters from me ere this. I wrote to Mrs. Townsend last Thursday. The Church of England padre has been changed this week. The one who has been here for four months has got up to The Front, a single young man; his successor has come direct from England. The R.C. padre will be leaving for home shortly. There are likely to be very many changes in our unit during the next few months. The happiest thing would be for us all to be able to pack up for home. However, that time will no doubt come if we can only be patient.

Last Thursday, 3 of us took horses and went over the Romani battlefield, where our men were so successful on Aug. 4th last year. We were in the saddle for 5½ hours, riding all the time. We were all very tired when we got back. It was exceedingly interesting and we were able to get some idea what our men have had to pass through. Of course, we didn't cover the whole battlefield, but only the more important points. From the first redoubt we saw the woods — palm trees — where the Turks were in hiding. When our men went forward, the enemy allowed them to get very near, then they opened a terrible machinegun fire and did great damage. Then, at the last redoubt, we saw the place where the enemy broke through and where they were held for 24 hours within 10 yards of our men, until reinforcements arrived, when some thousands of the enemy were cut off and surrendered. On this very spot there were heaps of (enemy) Turkish, empty cartridges, and within 10 yards there were heaps of English empty cartridges. Some of these I brought away as mementoes. In every redoubt there is a cemetery, beautifully kept, where our brave men, chiefly Scottish Rifles, have found their resting place. One place in particular, where two men were buried, was very pathetic. It was quite alone, wired

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

around, with a cross at the head and, on the graves, were the men's sun helmets and two shells set upright. I was particularly anxious to take a photograph of it, with the horses in the background, but my camera failed to act, and I had to leave without the photograph. From one place we could see faintly in the distance, the Blue Mountains. Not far beyond these mountains, our men are facing the enemy now. As we passed through the palm groves, there were huge clusters of dates, but — they were not ripe. I should think in 4 weeks' time they will be quite ripe; then I may go again.

We are all very much interested in the news about events on the Western Front. I wonder if it will be decisive?

We are having a plague of mosquitos this morning which are coming to us with a land breeze. I hope they will soon go, for they are a terrible pest; while they are not all malarial, yet some are, and they might inject the malarial germ.

Last week was frightfully hot. One day it was 112 in the shade. Yesterday it was 103, and 145 in the sun. How would you like that? But it was worse last year, for they had often 120 in the shade. So, we feel a measure of gratitude that we are not having it so bad this year.

I am anxiously waiting to hear from you again. Write to me as often as you can. Hope you are quite well again, dearest, and that you are all feeling quite strong after the holidays. I am quite well. Love to all; kisses for Kathleen and warmest love to you.

Your fond hubbie,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.
August 27th

My Darling Nance,

I was glad to receive two letters from you last week — the VIII and IX — of July 30th and Aug. 5th. Strangely enough, I received the letter of Aug. 5th first, and felt sure that the letter of July 30th had been lost. However, it is not so. Winifred's card reached me yesterday. I may say that last Friday and Saturday were very pleasant days, receiving letters and papers from you and others. I had a letter from Sally, and also from Mr. Price. They are all well at Hetton, and also at Malmesbury. Mr. Price's letter is fairly long and quite quaint.

I hope you have got all my missing letters by now. But, dearest, don't get unduly anxious about me if the letters don't arrive regularly. I am much safer here than I would be, even if I were on the East Coast or in London. Whilst we are a fair way North of the Canal, yet we are a considerable way from the actual Front.

I am glad that you like the snapshots. I hope you have got them all. I will be sending you a few more later on. What a trouble for Wilson, having to find rooms each year for these changes that come so often. I am sure he is doing the best thing to make a change at the end of 6 years. As to going North when I return, personally, I question the wisdom of doing so, for your sake and Kathleen's. I am fully convinced that the southern counties are the best for you both, especially if we can get into a hilly or bracing part. For many things I would be glad to go North, but the all-important thing to me is concern for the health of you and my pet. What do you really think? I see St. Day³³ is now open and also Newbury, and very likely we shall be well provided for when I finish with the Army.

I am glad you are having plenty of food. I am sorry to hear that you are thinner. I am much the same, I suppose it is because I eat so well.

Your letter from Cornwall was very acceptable. Glad you had such good rooms and were so nicely situated for the sea. I can quite imagine Kathleen having quite a jolly time. It will do her so much good, I feel sure. The sunshine will mean so much to her. I hope you are spending a month there. From your letter I gather you are only staying about a fortnight.

My previous letters will have put your mind at ease about the parcel I said I would send. Your stay at Perranporth would be made much pleasanter, having Stella's company. No doubt you are all having a good time together.

³³ Methodist circuit at Falmouth, Cornwall

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

This last week we have had another plague of mosquitos. So far, I have escaped their bites fairly well. We had a good and successful meeting last Wednesday when I gave a talk on St. Mark's Gospel – "The Cleansing of a Leper." The Bible Class on Friday was well attended and was very helpful. I introduced the subject on "A Parable of Grace" – The Lost Son. The discussion was most profitable and a large number took part. The Friday night's meeting is most successful.

I think I told you last week that we have got a new C. of E. padre. He and I went to Romani on Thursday. On returning, we called at the cemetery – where I wished to take a photograph of the grave and cross, where I buried the unfortunate man so recently, to send home to his mother. Before we entered the cemetery, he (the padre) innocently asked "Is it consecrated?" I was so surprised that I could make no answer. Really, no answer was necessary. To me the death of those brave and gallant men buried there was sufficient to consecrate any ground; don't you think so, dearest?

I heard from Mr. Percy Viner on Saturday. He is keeping very well and also very busy. He recalls the happy times we had together in Witney, especially the Sunday nights. He wishes for their return.

I have now spun my yarn. I forgot to say that we are having very good concerts at present, by the patients. We have been fortunate in having a few artists (professional) among them and it's really wonderful what they can do. They are giving another concert tonight. And this afternoon and evening we are having a Sports Day for the unit. So, today will be an off-day for all of us, and it will help to break the monotony. Some days the monotony is very trying.

I am glad to find that the time is slipping past, and whilst I am not tired of my life out here, I should like so very much to see you again. Once again, I ask myself to be patient! Hope I shall soon hear from you again. Send me heaps of letters! Love to you my darling and many kisses to my pet. Hope she will like going to school.

Your fondest lover,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER XIX

36th Stationary Hospital,

E.E.F.

September 3rd

My Dearest,

I had a good day on Saturday when I received 3 letters, one from you, one from Winifred and one from Father. There were also many papers from Wilson. There was one lot of papers which was 7 weeks on the way. It had been to Salonica, I suppose, because it was addressed to the 36th General Hospital. However, now I have lots of papers and letters.

Your letter was very interesting. I am so glad that you have had such a good holiday and that Kathleen has had such a good and jolly time. So, you only had a fortnight! What a pity you didn't stay longer! When I come back to you it will be very nice if we can have a week or so by the sea; there I can teach both you and Kathleen to swim. The drive to Newquay must have been very pleasant. I should have liked to have been with you, of course; also, when you went in search for the lost church.

I expect my recent letters have made it quite clear that I did not send the parcel for you, thinking just then that the journey was too precarious. However, we will wait and see how things go in the future. I hope you had a very happy birthday. You were very fortunate in having such nice presents from Stella and W. Gerrard. I sincerely trust that my wishes were carried out so far as the presents from Kathleen and myself were concerned. I wished that day in particular that I could have been with you.

I have received all your letters up to August 10th. My letters to you seem to be reaching you very irregularly. I send them most regularly, every Monday morning.

I am delighted to know that Clifford has been successful in his entrance Exam for the Grammar School. Hearty congratulations to him.

I had a fairly easy day yesterday. A United Board padre has come to hospital for a week's rest and he spoke at last night's service. He spoke very well indeed. He is a Baptist from Gateshead and he knows a large number of our ministers on the Tyne. So, we soon had something in common. He has been out here in the desert for 9 months. He is with a brigade and has seen a great deal at The Front. I am often wishing to have a change from my present post; but I don't like to ask to be removed, but would rather remain passive. But I should like to go up to the Front Line! However, I am a soldier and must do what I am told, go where I am sent, and do my duty.

The personnel had their Sports Day last Tuesday. We had a good day. Flat races, relay races, high jumping etc. etc. I entered into the officers' team for tug-of-war. We won our first heat. But we lost in the next heat, through bad management. It was a very good day.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Then the patients' concert last Tuesday was also very good. There is another tonight, to which I intend going. It is called "The Bing Boys". These men do really well and give nothing coarse. The personnel gave a concert on Saturday night, but it was really very poor. It was given in their dining hut and the heat was something terrible. Never experienced anything like it before. Such an experience certainly prepares one for the warmer place to come!

The weather is really getting cooler now, and is therefore much pleasanter. My batman had to go into hospital on Friday. He is a weakling and one thinks he ought never to have been sent out here. The entire rest is doing him good. Another batman comes in to do a few odds and ends.

Now I am absolutely at the end of my tether. There is no more news. I have no more funny cards to send to Kathleen. The next time I go to Port Said or somewhere else, I will get more. I am sending Kathleen a few shells picked up here at Mahemdia beach, on the Sinai desert. They will be worth keeping, no doubt.

If I had been in France instead of here, I would possibly have been home on leave, ere this. But now I must wait twelve months. Well, I hope the time will soon pass. It will be such a treat to be with you again. I had almost forgotten to tell you that Mr. Willett's nephew who came to meet us at Leicester Station has won the M.C. for gallantry in France.

Now I must finish! What about the photograph of you and Kathleen? What a long time it is in coming! Love to all. Kisses to Kathleen and warmest affection to you.

Yours ever,
Dick.

P.S. Father tells me that Ted has become father to a pretty girl. Her name is Enid Mary. Both mother and daughter are doing well.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.
Sep 4th, 1917

My dearest,

I am taking my courage in both hands, and send to you at the same time as I send this letter a parcel, which I sincerely hope will reach you safely. The parcel contains one square table cloth and one oblong, which I intended for your birthday gift. Then there are two mats, which are very commonplace, which I bought in Salonica. One I intended for you and the other for Kate. They have the coat of arms of that town worked upon them. They will do, at least, for a memento of my visit there!! I feel quite sorry now that I didn't get something better. However, I will try to get something worth presenting to Kate before I leave this country. I thought the scarf would do for Kathleen. I expect you will be able to turn it to good purpose for her this Winter.

It's a great venture to send these things, but I fully believe they will reach you safely. I hope you will like them. When I am able to get to a town again I will try to get something for Winifred and Clifford. As soon as you receive them, dearest, will you send me word at once. For I will feel anxious until I know what has become of them.

I gave you all the news yesterday and so have nothing more to write now.

Heaps of Kisses for Kathleen and fondest love to you.

Yours affectionately,
Hubbie.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.
Sept. 10th /17

My dearest,

I sincerely trust that you have received the parcel posted last Tuesday by the time this scribble reaches you. When it reaches you, I am sure it will be a surprise for you. It will remind you that I am still thinking of you. And I do think of you a great deal! I miss you most on Sundays, especially when the day's work is done. I haven't you to talk with about the work! But most regularly, Lt. Ainscow and I either go for a walk along the beach when the moon shines, or turn into my tent and there talk of religious things, or of our homes and loved ones. Recently, the C. of E. padre has joined us and, considering all things, we have a pleasant time. There are so very few officers to whom you can talk upon religious matters, and I feel grateful to have one! For, after all, it is no easy thing to lead a straight life out here. It is hard for the "Tommy", but it is not less hard for an officer. In several things I stand absolutely alone among 30 officers. I am trying to bear a worthy witness, and the remembrance of the prayers of you and Kathleen greatly help me. For the consistent witnessing for my Saviour (generally in a silent way, sometimes I have to declare it loudly) will do its own good work. Whatever else I fail to do out here or whilst I am in the Army, in other things I am determined to succeed right through to the end. Your prayers I am sure are greatly helping me!

I had no letters from you last week. I had one from Kate, with all the pretty views. I very much appreciate it and have had a good look at it several times. I also had some papers from Wilson, and to my utter astonishment I had a letter from Flossie Viner. It is quite a nice letter and must reply to it today. She writes most cheerfully.

The weather has been decidedly cooler recently. I suppose from now until next January, at least, we shall have our best weather out here. The prospect is certainly helpful. It is most interesting to watch the birds flying past across the sea, from North to South, migrating in droves to the warmer parts of Africa. They are coming from Palestine, Asia Minor, and other places on the north side of the Mediterranean Sea. Some fall here quite exhausted. Among them there are a great many quails, which are similar to a partridge, only smaller. We saw a small sailing ship on the horizon on Friday, the first for the last six weeks, and only the second boat we have seen in this bay since I came. So, you can see we are not troubled much with ships, although we are so near to Port Said.

I will think of my little one going to school this week. It is hard to make oneself believe it. It seems incredible! One of the saddest feelings that come to me is when I remember that my little pet is growing up and I am not with you to see it. I expect that there will be a great change in her by the time I return. How is the missionary box filling up? I should like it to be a nice increase on last year. Is my penny being put in for me?

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Last week I finished reading Dr. George Adam Smith's book on the Geography of Palestine. I found it very interesting and instructive, throwing a great deal of light upon my present experiences and correcting a great many false notions about the Holy Land. The maps also are very good.

The meetings last week were very well attended; so were the services yesterday.

I hope we shall soon have another mail. I greatly look forward to your letters, so send them along in shoals. I shall be able to receive them all.

We are all cheerful here, although we have no green fields to look upon or any thunderstorms and rains to break the monotony. And your humble servant remains very optimistic, in spite of the behaviour of our Ally the Bear³⁴. Keep your pecker up, ma hinny! There are better days coming!!

Hope you are all feeling quite fit. Love to all. Kisses for Kathleen and warmest affection to my darling,

Your fond Hubbie.

³⁴ Russia

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.

Sep. 17th, 1917

My dearest,

I have not heard from you since last Tuesday. I expect a letter any day now, so I live in expectancy. I was delighted to have Winifred's postcard and to hear that she has been successful in her recent examinations. Heartiest congratulations to her! She has done very well indeed. I will fulfil my promise to her at the earliest opportunity. What is her next step now? How does Clifford like his new school? I am sending him some stamps for his album, and will remember to keep any foreign stamps I may get. It is very nice for him to have such a hobby: it will help him wonderfully to know his geography.

Things have been moving rather rapidly with us for the last few days. We had a General inspecting the hospital on Saturday, and he was very pleased with everything. And really, the hospital is splendidly laid out and kept, remembering it is in the desert. Then, on Saturday morning, two officers left for England, one of whom was Dr. Ainscow, my friend. I am very sorry indeed that he has gone. Still, I am hopeful that he will return after a few weeks' absence. If he comes to Plymouth, he has promised to visit you. So, look out, dearest. Then, last night, four other officers (M.O.s) left for The Front, one of whom again was a close friend of mine, and was most regular at my services. These separations are very sad experiences!

We are having English Summer weather now and it's delightful! The sea is simply glorious today. There's a high sea running. Bathing was excellent this morning. We have good fun on a surf board. The way it's done is like this. You have a board almost as tall as yourself, about a foot and a half wide. You place the board in front of you, holding it with both hands well towards the top and, just as the wave is breaking, you push yourself forward and the wave carries you forward with a great rush. It is a delightful sensation. We had about 30 minutes of it this morning before breakfast.

The services were very well attended yesterday and the singing went with great fervour. One of our hymns in the morning was "Sound the Battle Cry" etc., and I have never heard it sung with such power as it was yesterday. My text in the morning was "Fight the Good Fight of Faith." At night I took "But Noah found Grace in the Eyes of the Lord." Friday night's meeting was one of the best we have had. The subject was "Are we responsible for our sins?" There was also a large number present. Quite a large number took part in the discussion.

I heard from Doris Viner on Saturday. She told me all about Miss Crowther's wedding and also sent me 3 snapshots of them, different groups. I also got one of Flossie in bed, with Mrs. P. Viner sitting by her side. Doris tells me that the improvement in Flossie is so

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

wonderful that they can scarcely believe it. She looks remarkably well and cheerful in her photograph.

I am enclosing you one or two more snapshots, which are not only taken by me, but also printed and toned by me. What do you think of them, dearest? The development of the films is such a "messy" job that I have that done for me.

We are so far from the main track here that we have to be content with local photographs, which is in large measure very English. But I would like to take some natives in their native costumes and following their native habits. Perhaps that will come before long. I am glad they interest you.

I cannot understand why the photograph of you and Kathleen hasn't reached me. I hope it will come soon. I often feel as if I would give anything to see you both again, my love. I am feeling very much like that now, with both of my friends gone. It has made me feel remarkably lonely.

I had a very nice letter from Ted last week with a snapshot of himself. They are all well and very happy. There is a great improvement in Ted's writing and composition. I am so pleased for that.

Now I have exhausted my store of news. I have spun my yarn and so will put on the closure. I am well and still doing my best to "carry on." Trust you are very well, my darling, and that all my letters are reaching you. Heaps of kisses for Kathleen and much love for you from

Your ever loving Hubbie,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.
Sep. 19th /17

My dearest,

Your letter of the 28th of last month reached me this morning. I was very pleased to receive it. What a long time it has taken to come! The card Winifred sent, although posted two days after yours, reached me nearly a week ago. It is most mystifying to us all how these mails reach us. Some are on the way quite a month and others less than two weeks. Still, we are all glad to receive them, and most eagerly wait for the next mail, and your humble one is not the least of the eager ones in this mess.

I was glad to hear that you had such a pleasant birthday. Your friends have been most kindly in their remembrances of you. It was a great sorrow to me that my gift could not reach you for the 21st of August. However, I hope it has reached you ere this. If it hasn't, please don't worry about it, because it takes parcels much longer to reach England, I suppose. I feel sure when it does reach you that it will please you.

So, Winifred will get all that has been promised to her, even your attaché case. Your gift, my dear, will be most useful for her. What can I send her, I wonder?

My leave has come through: I go to Cairo on Monday and will remain there until the following Saturday. Mr. Horne is passing here tomorrow for Cairo and we shall meet on Monday; we shall have 5 days together. So, I am feeling quite excited at the prospect of seeing that wonderful city of Cairo, which will mean seeing Egypt proper. The Pyramids, Sphinx, etc. will have to be visited. The change will do me good, for four months in such isolation as we are in here, with such tropical heat and a desert-waste all round, makes me feel the need of a change to keep in tip-top form. We shall stay at the Y.M.C.A. headquarters. Did I tell you in any of my previous letters that I was expecting to meet Mr. Shepherd and also Mr. Jones in Cairo? I hope they are able to arrange their leave for the same time, for it will be quite jolly for us all to meet there. It is quite 2 months ago since my Senior Chaplain came to see me. I thought I told you of his visit. I hope to see him again next week.

I was weighed last week, and found that I am the same weight as I was in England: 12 stones³⁵ 12 pounds. So, the heat hasn't reduced my size!

I am glad of your note about the photographs, dearest. So, I may expect them any day now! Send them quickly, that's a love!! I am longing for them.

³⁵ One stone measure equals 14 pounds

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

I wish I had more news to send you in my letters, dearest. But it is quite impossible for me to send more, as I have long ago exhausted everything worth mentioning. We have no excitements here, like others a hundred miles further north. We are really at a dead end, a blind alley or, in other words, in a pocket. I would really be very pleased to be transferred nearer The Front. Things are certainly very quiet, so few patients. The lull is most significant.

The rough sea I told you about on Monday continues. Yesterday and today we have not been allowed to bathe. But the weather is glorious with a fresh wind blowing, which makes us all feel very fit.

Thanks for information re money matters. I would like us to have the £200 at York. Do you think it could be done, dearest? How much have you sent to York up to now? I am trying to save a bit and often feel sorry that I cannot save more, because my monthly mess bill is high when compared with other mess expenditure. However, we are hopeful of that being reduced. The allowances, of course, always more than clear mess accounts and batman. By the end of this month I expect to have about £30 to my credit in the bank. At the end of my year there will be a bonus of £30. I feel sure we shall need all we can save for the days following the end of The War. How does your balance sheet stand?

The ladies on the snapshots I sent you are not the wives of officers but the Sisters belonging to the Hospital. Are you disposed to come out here, my love? I wouldn't worry about anything if I could only have you near!

The chatter of Kathleen is very interesting to me. Send me quite a lot of it. I like to have it. After 6 more months out here, I will be turning my steps towards dear old Blighty again, for they allow about a month for travelling as things are at present; and I am due home on April 18th, which is a lucky day: my birthday. What do you think of that, dear? It is 5 months ago since I left you standing on the step, as I rushed off like the wind, in a peculiar state of mind etc. I often recall that scene and the last look on your face at the window!!

Now I must finish. Love to Kate and all the others. Kisses for my dear little pet and a tight hug! With very much love to your own dear self, from your

ever fond and faithful Hubbie,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER XXV
36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.
Sep. 23rd, 1917

My dearest,

Your letter of the 2nd of this month reached me this morning. I was very glad to have it. It has put a bit of cheer into my life. I am more fortunate than you, for this letter makes two within a week from you. I hasten to reply to it before luncheon. I have just returned from my parade service. There will really be no time to write you tomorrow, as I shall be travelling all day to Cairo. I suppose you won't object to me writing a day earlier than the usual time?

I expect you will get quite a batch of letters from me all together. I have had a fair number of letters this week and also a week's papers. I have heard from Mr. C. Field of Brize Norton. He sends me the sad news of two young men who have been killed in France, both of them named Souch and relatives of the Souch (bakers) in Witney. They belong to Chiltern society. How sad for Mrs. Rose! Doris Viner told me in her last letter that Mr. Harold Early had been wounded, but he was making a good recovery. And so, we carry on!

You don't send me very good news about yourself and Kate, dearest. It is passing strange that you should be run down immediately after your holiday! I am glad you have seen the doctor. It is always what I have believed and have said so often— you ought to have a tonic every few months to keep you up to concert pitch. I wish I could only be with you to see that you have it!! Why not keep a bottle of Parishes Chemical Food³⁶ in stock and when you feel fagged³⁷, take it for a few days? I hope, my dearest, that you are quite alright by now. I am also very sorry to hear that Kate has had to have the doctor. I trust she also has quite recovered. I hope your next letter will give me better news. It is a pleasure to know that dear Kathleen is looking so well and also Winifred, in spite of her examination and the anxious waiting for the result. I hope going to school will suit my little pet! What a big "rig out" Winifred is having! Does all this happen every time she passes an exam? If so, I expect she won't mind how many exams come her way! Eh? She has done very well indeed!!

I am still anxiously looking forward to the photographs of you and Kathleen. The next letter ought to have them. Then there will be Winifred's? It will be nice to have a tinted enlargement of Kathleen! Have it done, my dearest, I have perfect confidence in your judgment!!

³⁶ Liquid tonic, strong in iron

³⁷ Tired

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

So, Wilson has accepted the invitation to Lymn. The more I think of the action taken by Mr. Horton and Davison re Swindon, the more I feel annoyed and the more I am convinced that their treatment is unjust as well as unkind. I have never had a scratch of the pen from our Connexional officials since I left England; it's now more than 5 months ago since I left, and I have sent two reports of my work here. I must admit that the Manchester district is fascinating, with one exception — Horwich.

I heard from Mr. Shepherd this morning. He went to Cairo yesterday, Mr. Horne went on Thursday. I shall meet them both, tomorrow. I sincerely hope Mr. Jones is able to get leave at the same time. We shall, I feel sure, have quite a high old time!

We had one or two flying machines over here this last week. It is said that the one over yesterday was an enemy. He was very high in the blue, but he didn't disturb us.

I am wonderfully well at present. I had a bathe this morning, the first since last Monday. The sea is still dirty, owing to the high seas, but the surface is like glass. The sea is colder and therefore more refreshing.

I was very interested to see the report of the Witney Circuit gathering in the Leader just to hand. I wonder who the writer is. They certainly had a good day!

I will write to you again as soon as I can, my love, and hope to give you some exciting news. Hope you are all quite well by now, and enjoying the Autumn and may the weather behave itself!

Kisses and a hug to my dear girlie and warmest and fondest love to my darling wife.

Your affectionate Hubbie,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

CAIRO

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Y.M.C.A. Hdqtrs.
Cairo
Sep. 25th, 1917

My Dearest,

I am now in the city of the East. It is simply glorious. I arrived late yesterday evening, then I had to report at headquarters with Rev. Horne and Mr. Shepherd. Mr. Shepherd looks very well, but Mr. Horne is much thinner than when I saw him last, 15 months ago, but he is very well. The journey from the Canal to Cairo is very fascinating, seeing the native villages and towns, which are chiefly built of mud and, in most cases, with a very loose flimsy covering for a roof. The work in the large cotton fields, most of which were in bloom and being gathered, then backed up on the camel's or donkey's back from there to barges on the canal, was wonderfully interesting. This was going on for more than 150 miles, in which women and children all did their share, and appeared to me to be the larger share. The striking thing, all the way up the Nile, was the women carrying large bundles on their heads and the menfolk walking by their side or oftener riding on the donkey. The Nile is rising very quickly now and will be at its height in three weeks' time and the whole Valley, of course, is being flooded.

Mr. Horne met me at the station and we took a "carry" to the Y.M., where Mr. Shepherd was waiting for us. We had a grand meeting, as you may imagine, and our tongues wagged furiously. After dinner we three went to look at some of the work being carried on by the Y.M.C.A. here. It is the Australian section; they do things on a grand style and are a great boon to the men. Indeed, if it were not for the Y.M.C.A., the "Tommies"³⁸ would be absolutely stranded. The Anzac³⁹ hostel accommodates 950 men for meals and for sleeping. All is done most reasonably. They pay for their meals, which is at a low price, then bed is free. The buildings are simply gorgeous. One cannot but have the greatest admiration for the work being done, especially as one sees it at closest quarters. Something is going on all day long and concerts or lectures at night.

This morning, Rev. E. B. Rawcliffe S.C.F.⁴⁰ came to see us and we had quite a long talk together. Then we went to see his new church (late German church), and we were both charmed with it. It cost at least £9,000 before any decorations were done inside. It has a huge dome in the centre, and is lighted by electricity — not one light can be seen. The organ is the finest I have ever seen, worked by electric power. It is German and cost £2,500. The first Sunday, the building was crowded and many had to be turned away. I am expecting a photograph of the church and will send it on to you.

Now, dearest love, I am in the greatest haste to get this off, so my account must be continued later. I have much to describe and tell to you. So good-bye. The dinner bell has

³⁸ Slang term for a common soldier

³⁹ Australian and New Zealand Army Corps

⁴⁰ Senior Chaplain to the Forces

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

just gone. Heaps of love and everything else worth sending to you and my chick. I am very fit.

Yours ever,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Cairo
Sep. 26th, 1917

My Dearest,

I am continuing my scribble to you. After visiting the United Board church yesterday morning, we all went to see the Principal Chaplain. He said that he was very pleased to see us. He was most amiable. I assured him that I was happy in my work at 36th Stationary Hospital.

In the afternoon we went to see the Pyramids and the Sphinx. They are simply grand! We didn't go inside the Pyramids, although guides sought hard to persuade us to do so. The guides were a perfect nuisance, also the men with camels and donkeys.

We all three had our photograph taken on camels, with the Sphinx and Pyramids in the background. The Nile is overflowing its banks now and the surrounding country is being flooded. The scenery is very fine, going out to the Pyramids; one can see it all from the tram which takes you to the foot of these wonders of art.

We returned to our quarters feeling very tired, and remained indoors for the rest of the evening. The Y.M.C.A. headquarters is a fine place and Mr. Horne and I are very comfortable in our room. It is certainly very much better than going to a swell hotel, like the other officers do. It is very quiet and we have splendid attention and the charges are very reasonable. It won't be more than 5/- per diem for everything, which is no more than the messing at the hospital (Mahemdia). Of course, the money flies apace and one has to keep a strict watch on his purse. However, I will keep in bounds. I am having a good time and already feel better for the change.

Today we are doing the bazaars and the zoo. I will possibly write of that tonight or tomorrow morning. Hope you are all in tip-top form now. I wish you could just be here with me now. You would have a good time and I am sure I certainly would. Love to you. More later.

Yours most affectionately,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

[Cairo]

Sep. 28th, 1917

My dearest,

Here I am again today, to give you further impressions and accounts of this wonderful city. I have done quite a lot since I wrote to you last. I want you to note that I sent you a parcel on Wednesday night. I scarcely know what to say about the things that are in it. There is a real silk Egyptian worked shawl or wrap. I hope you will like it. Then there are two brass vessels (pestles) which the natives pound their coffee in. They can be used as a bell, taking the rod and hitting the side. They sound very well. There is also a lotus flower brooch, which will do for Kathleen. The lotus flower is the Egyptian coat of arms. I think that was all in the parcel. I hope it will reach you safely.

I bought several other things which I will try to send later. I thought it best not to send all at the same time.

On Wednesday, I visited the bazaars (native) and they were most interesting. I cannot really describe them to you. Just before we entered the bazaars we went into a most interesting shop and factory. All the work was gorgeous — brass and woodwork and mother of pearl, let into the woodwork. I saw some done. There was a bedstead made of walnut and mother of pearl, made to order, the price was £750. This was for a very rich American Lady. It was very interesting to watch the men working. One was pulling a piece of string which turned round a piece of work, and held a very sharp chisel by his big-toe and did some wonderful work in this way. Then there were others working the brass work with different figures, and even a little boy was doing it. I asked the man how much his stock in the shop was worth and he said — more than £100,000. Then we went into the native bazaar. It was most quaint. Of course, everybody wanted you to buy. When I did buy, I never gave them the price they said first, but just about half. When I made my first purchase, then they would ask in broken English: What would the captain like to drink, tea, coffee or lemonade? Mr. Horne and I were out for fun, and that morning we had 3 drinks. They were all very nice. We spent the whole morning in the bazaars, of course. I didn't get anything like all I wanted to get. I must wait another time. After lunch we went to the zoological gardens at Giza. They have very fine specimens of animals and birds, and the gardens were simply glorious. Yesterday morning we had a look round the shops, and also went to Nazareth hospital to see a padre Mr. Horne knew, who is sick. In the afternoon we went to the barrage, which is 25 miles from Cairo. Travelling is at a cheap rate for the military. The barrage is really the dam of the Nile, which does so much to enrich this country; the water of the Nile (because of this dam) is used for irrigation. To go around and across the Nile bridges or the barrage is several miles, so we had a trolley pushed by 2 boys. The gardens there are also lovely. The Sultan is staying out there at present. I saw 3 of his steamers by the gardens (in the river, of course), and there were several marquees where the princesses were. Part of the gardens where the Sultan and his family are is placed out of bounds. We thoroughly enjoyed the day. Mr.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Shepherd and I often wished that we could have you and Mrs. Shepherd with us, for you would both enjoy it so much — everything is so glorious. However, we are both in hopes of showing you this country someday. This morning Mr. Horne and I saw the Rev. Cullwick, whom we met in the Y.M.C.A. last night; he is, of course, the friend I chummed up with so much in coming out here, and of whom I had lost all account since we parted more than 4 months ago. We all went to the citadel, which is the highest point round here, and had a very hot as well as an interesting time. We went to the mosque Mohamed Ali, which is the second finest mosque in the world. The mosque of St. Sophia in Constantinople comes first and Mohamed Ali is a copy of it, built 100 years ago. When the holy carpet returns from Mecca, it is brought here first and put in the holy place, and the next year it is removed and the new one placed there. The holy carpet, I may say, is first of all blessed by the Sultan, then the carpet proceeds to Mecca (carried by the priests, I presume) and the pilgrimage begins. It is a most gorgeous edifice. We had to put on slippers before we entered. The greater part of the building is made of alabaster. I got a little piece of it as a memento. The Egyptians are all out for making money. There was a service at 12 o/c today, but we were not allowed inside. From the Napoleon fort we had a bird's-eye view of the city of Cairo, old and new Heliopolis and many other places, and the great Nile, which at present is at the flood and very dirty. We returned to town and this afternoon we have been resting. Mr. Horne leaves after tea for The Front. Mr. Shepherd and I leave tomorrow. So, the time is speedily coming to a close. I often wish you were here. Everything is so glorious. I hope you will have an opportunity to come someday. I will write you again soon. Tea bell has gone. I am in excellent health. Hope you are all well. Kisses to Kathleen and warmest love to you from your affectionate,

Dick.

MAHEMDIA

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER XXVII

36th Stationary Hospital,

E.E.F.

Sep. 30th, 1917

My darling Nance,

I am back again to my sphere of work. I returned last night, leaving Cairo at 11 o/c am and reaching here at 8:30pm. I return feeling very much refreshed for the change. It has been a glorious week for me. I cannot say enough in praise of the city. Well, it is real Egypt, whilst Alexandria and Port Said are chiefly European. One can spend heaps of money there, but I have tried to be as economical as possible; apart from my purchases, I have spent very little. Then the charge at the Y.M.C.A. for a room and meals was very cheap, only 32/- for six days. If I had stayed anywhere else, it would have been at least £5.

I hope the parcel I sent you last week has reached you by the time you have received this. I am sending another little parcel of silk etc. this week, so look out. The silk will make a blouse or something else. The cloth is made by the Armenian Refugees at the Port Said camp. I don't see how I can send the brass work yet. Perhaps I will find a way by and by. I am anxious for you to have it.

I was most pleased to find your letter and the photographs waiting for me when I returned last night. I think the photographs excellent. Kathleen looks very sweet in both of them, especially so in the one with Teddy in her arm. Really, when I first saw them, I thought she had grown very much. It is also a very good likeness of you. It is the best you have ever had taken. I cannot tell you how pleased I am to have these photos. I will cherish them very much. I will be sending you a few more snapshots soon. I expect you are getting quite a large collection.

It's very strange that you are not getting any letters from me. They must certainly be held up somewhere and will appear by and by. Very pleased to hear that Kate is improving. I hope she is quite better by now. What a pity you should have been caused to suffer so much unnecessarily by Dr. Harvey's treatment. I hope Dr. Simpson has been able to make things better for you. He seems a very clever doctor. These country-town doctors are duffers⁴¹!!

I have sent two accounts of my work to Mr. Gilbert and, if he thinks they are worth mentioning, well and good. But we are not allowed to write any articles for the public press. This is in our instructions.

⁴¹ Incompetent person

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

I am writing this after my morning service and just before lunch, which is a most unusual thing for me to do on a Sunday, and especially in a morning.

I hope your Harvest Festival services were a success and also the anthems. Lt. Percy Jones has just been moved a little nearer Cairo. Reg. Viner is now in the R.F.C.⁴² I suppose Mr. Jones is worse off now than when he was a private or a N.C.O.⁴³ because, on receiving his commission in the Army, his civil pay was stopped, and as an officer his expenses are much greater. Mr. Shepherd is the better off of the two, and he is determined to remain in the ranks. Mr. Shepherd was also telling me about Mr. and Mrs. Ernest living at Byfleet. He also said that Ernest had been on the sick list and had been staying at the Hall for some little time.

I heard from Mr. Iles yesterday. They are all keeping well and have had a glorious harvest. Their son Reggie has now received a commission in the R.F.C. and has come to Egypt. So, I may see him before long. I should like to very much.

I have your photos in front of me. I have to stop writing to have another look at you both.

Now I must stop my chatter. I will be writing to you again in a few days. Thanks to Wilson for the papers. They wonderfully help me to keep in touch with church affairs. It is very good and thoughtful of you to save up money to pay the Insurance and Friendly Society!!

I didn't get anything for Winifred at Cairo last week, but I expect going there on duty in 8 days' time. I will see what I can get then.

Many thanks to Kathleen for her nice little note. Did she do that herself? It is nice to see her handwriting. Love and kisses to her. I am waiting to know what she thinks of the School. Love to all the others.

Fondest love to you my darling,

Yours always affectionately,
Dick.

⁴² Royal Flying Corps

⁴³ Non-Commissioned Officer

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER XXIX

36th Stationary Hospital,

E.E.F.

Oct. 4th, 1917

My dearest,

I am writing you again before hearing from you. My letter may be very brief for I don't seem to have any news. Your photographs are a great source of comfort to me. I won't tell you how often I look at them during the day, else perhaps you will think me over sentimental!! I will get some photo frames for them, then they will always be in front of me. I am beginning to think that several of my letters have been lost at sea. I am now feeling most anxious about the parcel sent to you on September 4th. I do hope it reaches you safely. There is also another sent from Cairo by letter post on Sep. 26th. And now again there is another, sent to you yesterday with a little silk and a linen table centre, from the Armenian Refugee Camp of Port Said. It will be a great relief when I hear that all these parcels have reached you safely. Write, my dearest, as soon as you can after receiving them.

You will notice, I presume, that I am repeating myself in the letters. This is with a purpose. If one letter gets lost, then you will possibly have it in the next.

I have just had orders to attend a conference of all U.B. padres in Cairo next week. So, I shall be there from Monday to Saturday. I am most fortunate having had just a week's leave. Eh? The M.O.s here are quite envious. There is so little doing here now, so few patients in hospital, that my work can be easily arranged for. Of course, if operations begin before next Monday, I suppose the meetings would be postponed. What splendid news from Mesopotamia! That and this — are really all one to my mind. Of course, I would rather have things remain as they are than have the hospital full of wounded. Don't you think that we are now at the beginning of the end? If Germany is really prepared to evacuate Belgium, France and Alsace, it may be the beginning of real peace negotiations. However, we must still be patient, and if peace were to come tomorrow, I don't think it would be possible for me to return home until my year has been completed. But if it happens to keep on until next Summer or Winter, I am now beginning to question the wisdom of returning at the end of my contract. You see I have no promise to fulfil to any circuit, and that leaves me free to remain as I am for the duration of The War. I should like to know what you think, my love. You see, ministers are the only class of men exempt from military service, and compulsion or conscription may be applied any time. Mr. Horne has signed on for the duration of The War. Still, it will be several months before I have to decide what to do; I should like to have your valuable opinion on the subject, so as to help me to a right decision.

I am enclosing you a few snapshots of Cairo. Several more I took, but they turned out failures.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

I see that all Xmas parcels from England to Egypt etc. have to be posted not later than November 1st. It would be nice to have something to remind me of Xmas, if it won't be too much trouble for you.

We had an excellent concert on Monday and Tuesday by the patients. A fortnight ago they gave us "The Bing Boys". This week they gave a musical comedy "Manhattan". It was really good and the boys and everybody does enjoy it. We have also a cinema show once or twice a week.

I purchased an "Arabic Self-Taught" book last week and hope to learn a little of the native language. It is very interesting if one is able to talk to the native in his own tongue. I will let you know how I progress. I am not really good at languages, but still I will try to learn as much as I can. Then I will perhaps be able to give you a little Arabic when I return.

Now I have nothing more to write about. I must get my work forward for Sunday and Sunday week, seeing I am away all next week. But as soon as I am able I will write to you again. Hope you are all very well now. I often long to see you again my dearest!! You are more to me than I can say and your letters are a boon and always sure of a very warm welcome. Hope Kathleen has settled down to her school nicely. Give her many kisses for me. Love to all the others and warmest and fondest affection to my darling.

Yours always lovingly,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER XXX
36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.
Oct. 6th, 1917

My dearest,

I am writing you again for the third time within a week. I sincerely trust such an infliction upon you won't be too much. I received your letter of September 16th on Thursday. Your letters reach me most regularly now. I am pleased you have at last received my missing letters. I hope they have all "turned up". I shall be glad to know.

I am glad to know that you have an account with the Cooperative Society. It's a very wise thing to do. It's well to save where you can!! I am also glad to be assured that your monthly cheque is sufficient. As to sending you another draft: I cannot just say how my accounts are standing, so I must leave things as they are at present.

So, you think St. Day and Newbury circuits beyond us! I think we had better leave them alone, indeed leave every other circuit alone until my commission has finished. How singular that your present letter should contain your expression of opinion about my term of Army chaplaincy, when my very last letter asked for it. The thing that seems to terrify you is the submarine menace. That would trouble me very little, because the dangers on sea have been reduced to a minimum. Then, I believe a short sea route from this land is the usual order at present. However, there are six months before that time, and great changes may take place before my yearly contract is ended. The successful attacks on all the fronts, with the exception of the Russian Front, is no doubt bringing the end appreciably nearer; perhaps something after all will come as a result of the Pope's Note. It seems probable. Don't you think so, dearie?

I am glad that Dr. Simpson is doing you so much good. What a blessing that you had him to examine you. I suppose the support has to be attended to every few months to save you from further trouble. I sincerely hope that the ease you have already enjoyed will become a permanent good. You urge me, dearie, to take care of my health. I am anxious that you should take that advice to yourself. Whatever the doctor's bill may be, it will not be too much to secure your comfort and health.

It is good news indeed to hear that Kate is improving so nicely. Glad to hear Kathleen is enjoying going to school. It is quite enough for her at first just to have the morning session. I will try to find her another card or two.

I hope the President's visit was a great success. Where did he make his home? Did I tell you that Rev. Spray had been sent to German East Africa? What an experience it will be for him. The climate though is very trying. Two more M.O.s left here for England this week. Several new officers have come to this hospital. Another goes up The Line today. I

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

am wondering when my time for a change nearer The Front will come. I hope it won't be too long in coming.

I heard from Mr. C. Viner on Thursday. It was quite a long letter. It is the first I have received from him and he has certainly made up for the delay. Mr. Percy and Reg. are both quite well. Percy keeps expecting leave. Reg. is now in training at Grantham. I was quite shocked to hear that Annie Quarterman is now unwell and kept in her bedroom. Isn't it awfully sad. Mr. Pritchard has made a good beginning. A Mr. Kirkland has gone to Chipping Norton circuit from the I.O.M.⁴⁴ He has eleven children. Rev. A. Longstaff has asked "Is this a work of grace?" (eleven children). It cost £20 for railway expenses. The Connexional Fund must be in a prosperous state, eh? Mr. Phillipson has also sent me a nice letter. They are all well and their 3 boys have just left for school. Rev. East is leaving for France again for 4 months for Y.M.C.A. work; and yet, as ever, he remains very critical about his people. I think really, they do very well for him. What do you say, dearie?

I had a very interesting experience when in Cairo last week. When we visited the barrage there were some native children coming toward us, with very pretty dresses and really pretty faces. I thought it would be very nice to have a snapshot of them. So, I stopped and asked them to stand still. Then I pulled out my camera. Then their facial expression began to change, and they shrieked most frightfully and half of them ran away as hard as their little feet would carry them. This happened in spite of a native boy telling them what I wanted to do. However, 3 of them remained and I snapped them. But it hasn't turned out well. They were too much in the shade. They would have made an interesting photo. I am very sorry that it has turned out a failure. I will try again next week.

Now my letter is getting rather long, so I must bring it to a close, in case I should weary you. I leave for Cairo on Monday and return on Saturday. These breaks away from the desert come as a great relief.

I hope your next letter will give me still better news about Kate and yourself. Kisses and a big hug for my dear pet, and the warmest of love for my darling girl.

From your ever affectionate,
Dick.

⁴⁴ Isle of Man

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

CAIRO

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Cairo
10/10/17

My dearest,

At last, I have found time to scribble a few words. I didn't arrive here until 12:30 on Monday night instead of 5 o/c — I lost my connection. Yesterday was spent in shopping for officers belonging to our mess and having chats with other padres. There are 18 of us for the conference. Today, from 8:30 until 1 o/c, we had a succession of talks and discussions. It was a very helpful time, all bearing on our work as padres, so far as the organization and administrative part of our work was concerned. Tomorrow morning will be taken up with talks or conversations on the devotional and religious part of our life. The most of the padres are Baptists. There are 3 P.M.s⁴⁵: Horne, Briggs and myself. Briggs was our senior in college. The fraternity we are able to have together is most stimulating.

The Sultan of Egypt died yesterday and is buried today.

Friday:

I had to leave off writing to you in a hurry on Wednesday noon. So, I must begin again. I saw the funeral procession of the late Sultan through the town to the mosque. It was very difficult to get a good place to see well. Several of us went in a building and went up and up the staircase. It was really an American skyscraper. We went onto the roof and had a good view, both of the procession and also of the whole city. The new Sultan was crowned yesterday, but we were in conference and so did not see the royal procession. We, all officers, are wearing a black band round the arm for 7 days.

The conference has been a delightful change and a wonderful uplift. The session yesterday morning, which was devotional, was most helpful. The U.B. padres in Egypt are a fine lot of men. Of course, that is not including myself. It's a real pleasure to make their acquaintance. The fraternity has been such that I cannot get away from the feeling that we are of the one church. There is really nothing separating us except a little paltry church government. What a pity we cannot have one great free church.

I have not been doing much sightseeing. The fact is I have not felt in the humour for it. I have been somewhat seedy, having an attack of stomach trouble again. I saw the doctor just before I left on Monday and he gave me a bottle; I feel sure it will make me feel alright soon. Of course, I feel no worse than I often felt at home. We are going to the bazaar this morning, then out to Heliopolis this afternoon.

⁴⁵ Primitive Methodists

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

I will be able to write you more fully when I get back to Mahemdia. I return tomorrow morning at 11 o/c. I expect a nice mail waiting for me when I get back. Two boats have come in since I left on Monday. Now I must bring my short note to a close. Mr. Horne and others are waiting for me. I hope you are all feeling better now and trust, dearest, that you are enjoying life more.

Love to you all and fondest affection to you darling.

Your old boy,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.
Oct. 14th, 1917

My Dearest,

I returned from Cairo last night, late. The journey to Cairo last Monday was very tiring. I left here at 10 o/c am and did not reach Cairo until 12:30 at night. But the return journey was quicker, so that made it better. The meetings last week were a great help; the men spoke splendidly, and from other speeches there was a great deal of information to assist one in the carrying out one's work. I enclose you the programme, so you will be able to judge for yourself.

On Friday morning, four of us went to the bazaars. Again, I found it very interesting, and again I spent more money on Egyptian things. These, I hope, you will get before long. There is a Sister leaving soon for England. She is going to take my parcel and post it when she gets to England. I will tell you when she leaves, and will also describe what's inside. I thought they would do for Xmas presents. In the bazaar we went to the silversmiths and goldsmiths. It was very interesting, through very narrow streets. Of course, everyone wished us to buy. but we didn't buy there.! I did buy what I think is a very nice costume-length corded Shantung⁴⁶; I hope you will like it. And when you get it, I sincerely hope that you will have it well made. There is also some Egyptian linen, good for a frock or a dress or an overall. When you see it, you will be able to decide what to do with it. There is also more brass work. I expect that you will find it an interesting parcel when it arrives. May it not be long in reaching you. I hope that the other parcels have been received by you now.

I received a parcel of books from the Book Room yesterday, ordered by me nearly 3 months ago. It has taken them 7 weeks to come. What a long time. So now I have a fair number of books to go on with. The books are as follows:

The Year Book for 1917 Conference
John the Baptist
The Jesus of History
The Holy Land by Dr. Kilman

Though, I also bought "The Student in Arms" in Cairo. A padre who was in hospital here for a long time gave me "The Fact of Christ" as an expression of his goodwill towards me. So, you see, dearest, that I am well supplied with books for the present and will have a good time reading them.

⁴⁶ A silk fabric

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

I am feeling quite alright now, after my slight indisposition last week. It is much cooler in Mahemdia than at Cairo, and therefore pleasanter.

It is now Sunday morning, just on lunch time, and I must finish my scribble. I will write you again soon. I was expecting to find a letter waiting for me, but alas! There ain't any!! May it come soon!! Love to you all. Kisses to Kathleen and warmest affection to you.

From your ever loving,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

MAHEMDIA

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

36 Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.
Oct. 18th /17

My dearest,

I am still waiting to receive your letters. What a difference it makes when I don't hear from you during the week! Something seems to have terribly gone wrong. However, I am hopeful that by the end of this week I will receive two letters from you, which will make up for the missing one of last week.

I am now back into the humdrum of the hospital life again. There are so few patients at present that there is really very little doing. We are waiting for something to take place. Because things are so quiet, I have very little news to send you — in fact, none. Of course, I can always talk about the weather. It is decidedly cooler, especially during the night. We are changing into our serge-khaki now. Khaki-drill is worn from May until Oct. 15th, when, as I say, we get into warmer clothing. The khaki-drill was often too much for us during the intense heat. Now we seem more civilized and European in our attire. I am wondering what kind of Autumn you are having. I sincerely hope that you won't have such a hard Winter this time as last year.

I don't remember telling you what the Y.M.C.A. did for the relatives of that young fellow who was burnt to death here about two months ago. You remember me telling you, I daresay, about the fatality. Well, when in Cairo, 3 weeks ago, I presented the case before the Y.M.C.A. secretary, that this man, who was an orderly in one of their huts, was a widower and had left an aged mother 79 who was dependent upon him, and also a little boy of 6. After a long talk with the secretary, on my suggestion, they decided to send the aged mother a cheque for £10 and will invest a £100 in a War Loan for the boy, to be drawn when 21, which will then be about £200. Don't you think this very generous of the Y.M.C.A. authorities, dearest? At first it may seem very little for the mother, but it has to be remembered that she will be in receipt of her Old Age Pension and also of help from the War Office. But I am quite pleased with the result.

I took several snapshots when in Cairo last week and they have turned out very well. I am enclosing a few with this letter. What do you think of them, dearest? Of course, they are very small, but I can always have enlarged any one of them. I think the group of the padres is very good. Those of the funeral of the late Sultan Hussein are also good, considering I was so far from it. You also get a good bird's-eye view of Cairo from them.

I have handed the parcels over to Sister Poole who will be leaving any day now. There are two parcels. It will be as well if I tell you what is inside them, won't it?

One parcel contains:
2 pieces of Egyptian linen (Blue)

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

- 1 Gong and stick (brass)
- 2 Ornaments (brass)
- 1 Pestle and stick (brass)

No. 2 parcel contains:

- 2 Pieces of Egyptian linen (Grey)
- 1 piece (8 yards) Corded Shantung for Costume
- 2 Finger-bowls (brass)
- 3 Serviette rings (brass)

Now, I intend these for Xmas presents. Let me just say who they are for. Two pieces of the Egyptian linen, either the blue or grey, is for Winifred, the other colour is for Kathleen. The two ornaments or the two finger-bowls are for Kate and Wilson. The pestle and stick and corded Shantung for you, with the ornaments or finger-bowls. The serviette rings are for the youngsters. Now is all that clear, dearest? The Shantung I desire for you to have made into a costume. I suppose it has very good wear and washes well.

My only regret is that I am not bringing them myself. It is very strange to think of Xmas without you now. However, there is one comfort in knowing that it cannot last much longer. How many of the 3 parcels have you received by now? I will be very much at ease when I know that they have reached you safely.

How are you progressing now, dearie? I sincerely trust that Dr. Simpson's treatment has removed all your pain and has put a little more pleasure into your life. I hope too that Kathleen is still enjoying going to school. I want to see the little dear and also you, my sweetest!! I pine to see you both. I miss our home life more than I can really tell. However, a little longer, and then. Love to all the others. Kisses for Kathleen and warmest affection to my darling.

Yours always,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER XXXIV
36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.
Oct. 20th, 1917

My dearest,

Your letter of Oct. 1st reached me yesterday. It is the only one I have had for a fortnight, so presume that there is at least another which should reach me soon. I have not received any papers from Wilson for a fortnight now. Maybe your letter and the papers will arrive at the same time.

Parcels are a long time on the way. I expect by now you have received it and I hope the other two; then, you will find what I have sent you. The first one was sent by Parcel Post; the other two by Letter Post and should reach you much earlier. Now there are really two more on the way — described in my last letter — for Sister Poole has left for England today. She will post them or deliver them herself (if she lands at Plymouth), when she arrives in the old country. Miss Poole's home is Bristol and she is on her way to England to be married. We were talking the other day when I suddenly found out that she knew Hawkesbury Upton and a great many people that I knew. What a small world it is after all! I hope she will be able to call to see you.

I am sincerely glad that you are taking Phosphorene⁴⁷, and fully believe that it will do you good. I wish that I was with you to look after you! I am too far away to do that now, but dearest, do take the greatest care of yourself. And when I do return, I will give you extra special attention. Sorry to hear that Kathleen has had one of her bad colds. What a blessing it has left her so quickly. I hope she will keep free of them this winter. It is really a pleasure to know that she is enjoying going to school. I should so much like to hear her telling what she has done at school. I feel that I am missing quite a great deal of her life now. It must all be very interesting.

I should very much like to read Robert Hitchens' book "The Spell of Egypt." The quotations you give are very true. You must not come to Egypt if you are in a hurry. I must try to get hold of the book. I am busy at present reading "The Fact of Christ" by Dr. Carnegie and "The Last of the Prophets: John the Baptist." I am half-way through a book of O'Henry's "Cabbages and Kings." It is fairly interesting.

How nice to know that the old friends in Witney think so kindly of us. Mrs. Phillipson is a really good sort. I heard from Flossie Viner yesterday. She is still confined to her bed, but Dr. Harvey, who has been over to see her at Farringdon, thinks she may sit up a little each day. I suppose by now Flossie has been removed to Witney. Mrs. Percy, after a month's holiday at Southsea, will return to Witney to nurse her and will thus relieve Mrs. Bert. What a blessing that they (Mr. and Mrs. Bert and also Flossie) have had Mrs. Percy

⁴⁷ Brand of tonic wine

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

to do so much for them. Flossie in her letter tells me that the R.F.C. are coming to Witney — on the Burford Road. They are removing the Flying School from Oxford, where they had such floods last year. The workhouse will be used for a warehouse or storage. Fifty houses are needed for the officers and their wives. So, Witney will have a little life this Winter. Roy Morgan has passed his exams as a pilot in the R.F.C.

It was very sad about Mr. Harold Early. What a good thing that he is making a good recovery. Flossie tells me that he is now in Leicester. Jack has left the Wesleyan School now and is likely to go to an Oxford Grammar School. I believe Doris is still going to Oxford for lessons in shorthand. Mr. Shepherd has written Doris one or two letters in shorthand from Egypt. One I censored when in Cairo. Did I ever tell you that part of my duties here is censoring letters?

So, my dearest, are you prepared that I should come home at the end of my contract? Possibly, if I don't resign my commission in April, I may be able to get a transfer to "home service" for the duration of the War. If chaplains remain in the Army more than a year, it is because they have had some time in home service first or are single men. This is a general rule. Twelve months on the desert here is quite enough for anybody. However, great changes may take place before very long, and the War come to an end. It was six months yesterday since I said goodbye to you. So, I am halfway through the year. To get an appointment in Plymouth or nearby would be very acceptable. However, we must wait a little longer, and see how things go.

Send me all the news you can, dear. There are several things, always, of course, that I cannot talk to you about, because of their military importance. Perhaps this will explain why my letters are sometimes stale to you; for I feel sure that they must be. But you are not limited in your scope in writing to me. So, dearest, kindly bear with me if I ramify a good deal in my letters.

Has Kate got quite strong again? If I had an invitation to Winchester, I believe I would accept it!! I know it to be a good circuit and with very few churches. I expect Wilson is very busy again with Harvest Festivals, etc., which come just now. There is much more I could say, my love, but I don't think it prudent to put it into a letter; and so, will now finish by sending love to Kate and all the others and kisses to my pet and fondest and warmest affection to my darling wife.

Yours always.
Hubby.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER XXXV
36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.
Oct. 25th, 1917

My dearest,

I am still waiting to hear from you again and, as a result, I haven't very much to write about this morning. I have had two lots of papers or 3 lots of papers from Wilson without having a letter from you. The papers received are old ones, Sep. 13, 20 and 27. Your letter of the 23rd has not yet reached me. It may come soon, for sometimes they seem to have a peculiar weakness to get delayed. I don't think all our English mails can come by the same route. It seems to take an age for parcels to come.

Well, I think that I have sent the last of my parcels to you. It is such an anxious time when one is dispatched that I think it will be better, if I do get anything more, to keep them and bring them home with me. The next letter ought to inform me that, at least "one of the parcels has reached me". I should just like to be hidden in the room when the parcel arrives and is opened. That pleasure I shall miss. But still, I feel sure that they will give pleasure to you. That is why I have sent them and that makes me feel happy. If your joy is anything like mine when I purchased the articles, then I have been amply rewarded. Just tell me all you think about them, won't you, dearest?

I wish it had been possible to have sent something for Kathleen's birthday gift which is 3 weeks next Wednesday. If I had only remembered it when in Cairo! But I don't expect to leave the camp for some months to come now. So, I am sorry that I can only send a few written words to express my best wishes for her birthday. May it be a happy day for her and may she have many more of them. And, as they come, may she be an increasing comfort and help to you, my darling. My greatest joys in life are you and Kathleen! and my only drawback in being out here and my only cross, is in being separated from you. However, we still remain very hopeful about the end of this terrible war.

What a terrible time the poor Londoners are having with the Raiders! How are the Newsteads and Stella? But the Raiders are not having all their own way. What a fine result by the British and French aviators in the last Zeppelin Raid! To think that 9 out of 11 "zeps" have been accounted for. Surely this will strike terror to the raiders; perhaps, before very long, the enemy aviators will mutiny as the U-Boat sailors have done already. I have been led reluctantly to the conclusion that reprisals is the only sure remedy for such wicked deeds. What do you think about it now? Do you still hold that reprisals ought not to be? I would like to have your opinion.

I see that Mr. Gilbert has inserted a note in the "Leader" about my work out here.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

I have just received the enclosed note for my Annual Subscription to the S.M.W.O.⁴⁸ Fund. I am wondering if you have already sent it. I am forwarding it to you to ask, if you haven't already done so, to kindly forward for me. The hospital is still very quiet. I don't see how it can remain so much longer.

I am trying to keep fit by doing a fair amount of exercise. I often go for a long stroll along the beach every day, and once or twice I have a good brisk ride on horseback. The men are now playing football. I should like to play, but it is really too violent for me. I am getting old!! The weather is ideal now and the sea is colder, which makes bathing more refreshing.

I am anxiously waiting to hear from you again and to be assured that you are all keeping well. Send me heaps of letters, dearest. Love to all. Kisses and best wishes to Kathleen and fondest love to you.

From your fond hubby,
Dick.

⁴⁸ Superannuated Ministers, Widows and Orphans

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER XXXVI

36th Stationary Hospital,

E.E.F.

Oct. 26th /17

My darling,

Your delayed letter just received this morning. I was very pleased to get it. Now I have more particulars about Kathleen's cold and also know that you have been laid up with a cold too. I hope by this time that you are both quite free from it. From your description of your own sufferings, I think it must have been influenza. I suppose you will have to keep Kathleen well shod and clothed this Winter. Have you got her any waterproofs yet? Of course, I expect she will be wearing boots.

I appreciate this letter very much because it was written to me when you certainly had a good excuse for not writing to me. It was certainly shorter, but I can assure it was — sweeter, because of your devoted spirit behind it.

Of course, having only written to you 24 hours ago, I have nothing much to write about today. I have just prepared a talk for the Bible Class tonight on "God and Religion." The stronger the meat, the better the men like it. And it is the best thing to credit the men with intelligence and a mind to grasp the deeper and more difficult things of our faith. What they enjoy most on Sundays is a real evangelistic, Gospel address. I am doing my best to satisfy this need. And word is coming back from the Front Line concerning men who have been in the hospital here, and what good they have received from our services. Whilst we are only having small congregations now, owing to so few patients, yet the services are most inspiring. I sometimes get in the dumps about my work and wonder how far I am justified in standing up in the name of my Master. Then, news which filters through to me in most unlikely places, gives me fresh heart and boldness and confidence. Visible results are scarcely ever to be seen. But we are not to work for that, dearest, are we? The work is spiritual and the work of grace so often goes on silently in the secret of a man's heart. This thought helps me and leads me "To thank God and take Courage". I am afraid the people in the old country are being misled or misinformed about the Boys at the Front. There is no revival of religion here. Indifference, disloyalty and heedlessness are as prevalent here as at home. We have to work hard to keep things going. I always feel thankful for a small faithful few. Better, of course, if the few were a host. But a few may become a host! So, we labour on!

I am having a good time this week, having so many papers from Wilson arriving within a few days. There is now another mail due. Alas! I am like Oliver Twist, eh?

I heard from Mr. Shepherd this morning. He is keeping quite well, and all are well at Staple Hall. I heard from Sally a few days ago. Grandmother is only fairly well. She is

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

most anxious to see me. I must go to see Grandmother when I return. I think she is fretting about me. But I am safer here that you all are at home.

Now this is all at present. Love to all. Kisses to Kathleen and warmest love to my darling from

Your ever-loving,
Dick.

P.S. Thanks to Kathleen for her drawing. I am very pleased to have it.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.
Oct. 29th, 1917

My darling Wife,

I was very pleased to receive your letter of Oct. 7 last night. It was a splendid finish to a good day. The news you send me is much more cheering. To know that the parcel reached you safely was a great comfort to me. Glad you like what I sent for you and that Kathleen was pleased with her scarf. I reckon that the other parcels on the way to you, if not now in your possession, will be still more pleasing. There are now 4 parcels on the way to you, and all of them I trust will reach you safely and gladden your heart.

I don't expect Dr. Ainscow was near Plymouth, else he would certainly have called. I am pleased that the state of my money affairs gives you satisfaction. Your question about Mr. Horne being a good companion: he is a decided improvement on his brother. But, candidly, there are other men I like better. Mr. Shepherd was a long way ahead of him in this respect. Indeed, I have come to like Mr. Shepherd exceedingly. He is very much devoted to Mrs. Shepherd. I hear from Mr. Shepherd fairly often now. I heard the other day from him. He is very busy now! In his last letter he told me that Mr. Jones was expecting leave to England, having been out here so long. I hope he will get it, for he must need it; Mrs. Jones too, I think, sorely needs it. Ray (Mrs. Morgan's son) is expected in this part any time now. He has passed his examination as a pilot (aviator).

I would like to see you in your new blouse that W. Gerrard gave you. And how I would like to see you in that silk material I sent you. It was the very best I could buy and feel sure you will have it well made. Your description of your photograph is just what I think. You do look sad, but I think it is because you are weary. You are certainly much thinner than when I left. I hope you are taking plenty of nourishing food. I expect your recent trouble has been the cause of it. However, I hope you will pull up now and be quite plump and well when I return for my next birthday. But, dearest, I am so glad to have your photograph and Kathleen's. They are now in nice little frames on my table in the sitting-room part of my tent. My tent is really composed of 4 parts, without a division between. There is the bedroom - where I sleep on my bed; the bathroom - where I keep my wash-stand and shave and brush my hair; the sitting-room, where I sit in a basket-chair by the side of a square portable table and read etc. by night and day; then there is my study where I write, make sermons with a few books in a wooden box on either side of me; then, there is of course my wardrobe where I keep my clothes — which is the tent-pole in the middle of the establishment. And it is really surprising how comfortable one can feel, with the desert all around, in such a place. What do you think of that for an abode? I have now had it for nearly 6 months.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

I am glad you are all feeling so well now and hope you will continue to improve. It is so delightful to hear that Kathleen is making such good progress at school and that she is enjoying it.

The weather has broken here at last. On Friday we had a desert wind, which was a slight sandstorm. At night the lightning was most vivid at sea. On Saturday it was again very cloudy and a slight rain-shower came, the first I have experienced since leaving dear old England. Last night we had another shower. It is much cooler and is more tolerable. Further up The Line, two days ago, there was rainfall of one inch in one hour. Now, the rule for us who live in tents, during this weather, is to slacken one's tent ropes and make fast the pegs, else we may find the tent about our heads in the morning. I wonder if Winifred can explain why?

So, I will come home to you about Easter. If the War still continues then, I may ask for a home appointment which will be better for us both. I am wonderfully well, so much so that I believe that I am putting on weight. An awful thing to do really when on active service!!

Things are going with me much the same as in past weeks. It's very quiet. Not for long now, though!

Love to Winifred, Kate etc. Kisses to my dear Kathleen and warmest of love to my darling wife

from your ever-fond Hubby,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER XXXVI
36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.
November 1st, 1917

My dearest Nance,

There was an English mail last night and I was most fortunate, for I had four letters, two of which were yours (Oct. 12 and 16) and one from W. Newstead and one from Mr. Pritchard, Witney. I also had two weeks' papers from Wilson. So last night I had a good time and read well into the morning.

Of course, I was very pleased to have your two letters and to hear such good cheery news about you all. Glad the first parcel from Cairo reached you safely and so quickly. Of course, it was sent by "letter post", which explains why it reached you so soon. I am delighted to be assured that you like the shawl and also the little bowls. Of course, you did quite right to give Kate one. Then, I am very pleased that my little pet liked her lotus brooch. I have not forgotten Winifred and Clifford, as succeeding parcels will prove. I expect you have received by now the silk I sent for you etc., in the second parcel. But I think the two parcels sent by Sister Poole will please you most of all. And as I have said before, my regret is that I cannot be in the room when they are opened. But I feel sure that they give you pleasure and so I am happy.

I am interested to hear of your new hat and fully expect to hear in my next letter from you that you have either got a new Winter dress or costume. The costume length I have cut you will do nicely for next Spring and possibly the Summer. I do hope that that corded Shantung will please you. And how does Winifred like her dress length of Egyptian linen? and Kate her ornaments and Clifford his ring? I will try to send Clifford something more for Xmas.

I like to have all the news of Kathleen's life at school. It greatly interests me. I am delighted that she takes such an active part and interest in the Primary concert. I shall want to know all you said as Chairwoman! The news about Winifred and her exam is very good indeed.

Win. (Newstead) sent me an interesting letter in which she gave me an account of their experiences in the recent air-raids. What a restless life they must all be having and I am really surprised that Mrs. Newstead continues to make progress under such conditions.

I had Winifred's letter and photograph on Tuesday, the day after receiving yours. It is a very good photograph; don't you think so? I am writing to her shortly. What a nice lot of photographs I have now. It certainly helps my surroundings to be more homelike. But it would be much better to have the real living ones about me, especially you and Kathleen. How often I wish you could come to me in Egypt so as to see Alexandria and especially

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Cairo. Cairo is most fascinating and increases upon one! I do hope it will be your privilege to visit Egypt. Of course, the desert is not at all attractive, especially where I am spending my days. If it were not for the privilege of reading some fine books and the receiving of such nice letters from you and others, as well as sending letters and parcels to you, life here would be almost intolerable. So, continue to send me plenty of letters. Although I have not answered Kate's last letter, yet I shall be so pleased to hear from my beloved sister again!! How nice it would be if we could have a renewal of our honeymoon when I return? Don't you think that this idea is worth serious consideration, if it was really only for a week!

We had a good concert on Monday night by the personnel of the hospital. It was "The Bairnsfather Bhoys" in three acts. It was most amusing. Do you ever see the Bystander? Last night we had a very nice service. Our "Church Tent" has been greatly improved recently. The electric light has been installed and the sandy floor has had some wire-netting put on it, which makes it better.

Now I must bring my scribble to a close. We are still without any fresh news and excitement. Patients are few and rumours many!! But, there – I must not say anything about military affairs.

Kisses to my Kathleen; love to Kate and everybody else in the house.

But my special love for you, dearest, from

Your fond old Hubby
Richard Cowie C.F.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER XXXVII

36th Stationary Hospital,

E.E.F.

Nov. 5th, 1917

My dearest,

Here I am again, starting a letter with nothing to write about. I mean to say that there is really no news to send you of the kind which is allowable. I am ready as always to receive another letter from you. I suppose the chief thing you wish to know is whether I am well or not. I am very well indeed and also happy — considering where I am — in the desert of sin and barrenness. When one gets on the top of a sandhill and looks round as far as the eye can see — which is sometimes 30 to 40 miles — it is all a bare barren sandy waste. And in such a desert wilderness as this, it must have been a sore punishment to the people of Israel to be here for 40 years. But I also remember that the caravan route, only 3 miles from this very spot, is where Joseph and Mary with our Lord made their journey to Egypt. The sea still has charms for me, and regularly each morning I have my bathe. Fancy bathing on Nov. 5th! It seems as if we shall be able to go on for a few more weeks yet. I hope so!

On Friday, all the Officers were invited to tea by the Matron and Sisters. I went and enjoyed myself immensely. It was quite a nice tea and a touch of home about it. We had games afterwards. At tea we were each given a card which was made out like this:

Tasting

Set on Plates:

Two kinds of jellies

Two kinds of nuts

Two kinds of powders

Feeling

Six different things under a cover;
Only allowed 2 minutes to feel.
Then, after, write their names on
your card.

Hearing

Six different sounds -

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

after each other, of course

Smelling -----

Six different liquids -
scents, or anything else -
to smell

Seeing -----

30 articles (ordinary things),
placed on a tray under a cover.
The articles are shown for 2 minutes,
and then you write as many names of
articles as you can remember.

It is quite a good game and is really 5 games in 1. And what do you think? I got second prize. The first prize was won by a Sister who only got one more correct than myself. My prize was a leather tobacco pouch — a very good one!! I will keep it as a memento of the event. There were other games also. I am sure you would have enjoyed it. There were 20 doctors, 3 padres and about 30 Sisters present. So, you can see we were not a small party! I thought the above game would be of use to you for Xmas or some other time this Winter.

Well, we are not so quiet now. We had a large convoy in yesterday. As you no doubt know, long before this reaches you, things are getting very lively out here. Things are going well, and we are confident as to the result. Of course, naturally, I am anxiously wondering how the Rev. Horne and Mr. Shepherd are getting along. I am writing to them both today.

We had quite a heat wave on Saturday. The temperature suddenly went up 30 degrees in the shade and brought it to 96. It was a most trying day. All my books in the tent began to turn up their backs, just like a book does when left in front of the fire. And we all felt just like the books — quite limp, with all the stiffness being taken out of us. It only lasted the day, I am glad to say, and is the regular sign that the weather has changed from Summer to Winter. Now we may expect the storms. Indeed, we had a heavy thunderstorm with lightning and rain on Saturday night. But still, in spite of this, I am still in summer outfit and during the day I sit without any tunic on and my shirt sleeves up to the elbow. So, we are not quite freezing yet!!

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

The services yesterday were only poorly attended, because of so few patients; and, at night, we only had a dozen because the convoy needed all the R.A.M.C.⁴⁹ staff. The place will be a little more lively and interesting now.

I am often thinking of you, dearest, and will be heartily glad when we are together again and enjoying home life once more. Hope you are still keeping well. What a time we shall have when we set up house again and our dear Kathleen supplying all the conversation! Does she talk as much as ever? I hope so, for we are such quiet creatures.

Now I have nothing more at present. Love to Kate and Wilson and the children. Kisses for Kathleen and fondest love to you my darling.

Yours ever,
Dick.

⁴⁹ Royal Army Medical Corps

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER XXXVIII
36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.
Nov. 12th, 1917

My Darling,

It is a week ago since I last wrote to you. And I haven't heard from you for ten days now. The past week has seemed dreadfully long as a result. However, I am in high hopes that I shall receive two letters from you this week; then I will feel very much happier.

This has been a busy week. The hospital is now full. The men are only slightly wounded. The more serious cases have gone elsewhere. The men here are very cheery: they are conscious of having done something real this time and their morale is very high. I expect we shall be busy now for the next four months, while it is cool. At present, it keeps very warm for November. Still we have a cloudier sky and occasionally a small shower of rain. The stories from the men about the Gaza—Beersheba battle are very interesting. I would like to relate some of them here, but I am forbidden! I am making a note of them, so you will have them when I return.

What an awful catastrophe in Italy! I wonder what it all means? Why cannot we make such a drive in Flanders and France? and get the battle onto the German soil? Still, our men are doing well in Flanders.

We had large congregations yesterday, and the most appreciative I have had for a very long time. I couldn't help feeling that these men had come to worship God. Their singing was simply grand. That alone did one a great deal of good. Their words of appreciation I must not repeat. But it was a high day for me, and I only wished I could have such a congregation every Sunday. Yesterday, I really felt I was doing something worth doing. Such congregations will last for some weeks now, I expect, and I am going to make the best of them. I think the majority are Presbyterians. There are some Primitive Methodists, Durham boys; it has been quite interesting to have a talk with some of these.

I finished reading T. R. Glover's book "The Jesus of History" last week. It is a splendid book. I am sure Wilson would be pleased to read it. It is an unusual type of book, but very stimulating to thought. Now I am reading "The Last of the Barons" by Lytton.

The utmost is being done to interest and amuse the patients. So, we have concerts every Monday and Tuesday and a cinema show each Friday and Saturday. So, now we hold our meetings on Wednesday and Thursday. The concerts and the

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

pictures are on a fairly high level, so we keep clear of their nights as far as possible. Six weeks tomorrow will be Xmas Day. We are now making arrangements to have a Xmas carol service on Sunday night, December 23. The men are quite happy to prepare for it. So, I have sent to Port Said for some carols, and hope we shall be able to begin our practices this week. I wish you could be here to help, dearest! And what a happy Xmas I would have! I am afraid I will have to be content to dream of you for a little longer!!

Of course, I am keenly anxious to know if you have received your Xmas parcels yet. How thankful I shall be when I hear from you to say that you have received them safely.

I have no more news now, dearest. I will be glad when I have a change. When that takes place, I will be able to write you longer letters and possibly more interesting ones too. Now the troops are moving to the North of Palestine. I am anxious to go nearer to them. It is possible that we may be able to have a look at Jerusalem before very long. That would be a delightful experience, eh? If I do go there, then you shall have something worth keeping — from Jerusalem!!

Is Kathleen still keeping well in spite of the wintry weather? I hope you are quite well now, dearest. I am often thinking of you. The truth is, I have had a very bad attack of homesickness for the past few days. My heart has often said "I want to go home!"

Now I must stop and just have a look at your photographs; then I shall feel better. Kisses to Kathleen and fondest love to you, my darling.

Yours ever,
Dick.

P.S. I wrote to Winnie Newstead last Tuesday.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.

Nov. 16th, 1917

My darling,

I received your letter of Oct. 22nd last night. I was exceedingly pleased to hear from you again after fourteen days silence. The mail which has just arrived is a week late, so there ought to be another very soon. Then the papers also arrived, which are always very welcome. While I think of it, dearest, if there are any decent Xmas numbers of the weeklies this year, I should be so pleased to have them. At times I am able to do a fair amount of reading, especially after dinner at night and before I turn into my bed.

I am so glad, dearest, that you have received the parcel with the silk and table centre safely. I am very pleased that the silk meets with your high approval. I think I told you some time ago that the table centre is the work of Armenian Refugees at Port Said. I will see what I can do for Kate and Winifred, if you think it necessary after the last two parcels have reached you, which contain something for them. I hope to have leave to Cairo again sometime in the new year. Then I will make several more purchases to bring home with me. I am very sorry not to have been able to get anything more for Clifford for his Xmas present. However, something will come home with me for him.

You are very wise to make your purchases for clothing etc. now. For I cannot see how things will be cheaper for years to come after the War is over. The stocks will have got so low. Glad to hear you have got a nice big coat. From your description of it, I think it must be very nice and warm.

About coming home. My present opinion is that I shall see the Principal Chaplain about two months from now and secure his recommendation for a home appointment. If I can secure this, I am prepared to sign on for another year. It has been exercising my mind quite a great deal recently and this is my decision. If this could be secured, then it wouldn't be so bad. Of course, I am perfectly happy in the work when I am able to do something for the men. I have never liked the Army life and ways, and will be glad to be freed from it; but then, for the sake of others who are in it and whom I have learnt to love, I am happy to remain in it. Of course, I am anticipating seeing Palestine before very long. Rumours are flying that we are likely to go North soon. But no reliance can be placed in such winged and fantastic things yet. Our men are doing very well in Palestine, I believe better than the official reports tell us. I went to the base, nearly 30 miles away, on Tuesday morning, and saw my first sight of enemy prisoners. These were Turkish prisoners of war, having come down the Line the day before. They were a motley crowd, in all kinds of garments, and seemed rather dejected. I understand they were chiefly Arabs (Bedouins). I was sorry not to have my camera with me: it would have been an interesting snapshot. Prisoners continue to pass down the Line.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

The R.C. padre, who has only been here a month, is now waiting for his relief to come, so that he can proceed to England for leave and then take up work in France. He has been in the Army 16 years. He is a Canon and has several decorations — orders of different countries. We have got on very well together and have become most friendly. It is surprising how religious differences vanish out here. The C. of E. is sometimes annoying because he always makes you feel, consciously or otherwise, that he is the chaplain. However, I put it down to his ignorance and youthfulness! So, sometimes I have to tolerate him.

I hope the concert and C.E.⁵⁰ anniversary were both a success. I now look forward to your Xmas parcel. I wonder what's in it. I expect you had a similar feeling when you knew my parcels were on the way.

Our meetings this week have been well attended. About 30 were present for the communion service on Wednesday, and last night we had a large company for the Bible Class. I introduced the subject on "The Second Coming of Our Lord." We had an animated discussion.

I had a letter (another) from Flossie Viner this morning. She is now home. It is quite a newsy letter. Mr. Percy was home on leave then for ten days. Reg. had also been able to get home for a few days, at the same time. The Hall was then quite full up. Mrs. Morgan was there from Bristol. Mr. and Mrs. Morgan are quite worried about Ray, who had then just left for Egypt. Mr. Harold Early is a great deal better and was also home on Sick Leave. It is quite nice to have the Witney news so frequently.

Now, my darling, I must put on the brake. I think that I have said quite enough for this time. I am ready for another letter from you. So glad you are all so much better. I shall be glad to be with you all once more; then we could have some fine times together, which is not possible by letter. And yet, letters, especially yours, are life to me now. Love to Kate and Wilson, Winifred and Clifford, and also to my two pets. Kisses — heaps of them — for one and warmest affection for the other.

Your loving husband,
Dick.

⁵⁰ Christian Endeavour

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.

Nov. 20th, 1917

My dearest,

You will notice the date of this letter! Yesterday and today, my thoughts have been much occupied in thinking of our "Little Treasure". I hope she will have a very Happy Birthday and will have very many more of them to come. I hope, my dearest, that she will be an increasing joy and comfort to you. She has already been a blessing to us both, has she not, dearest? I miss her very much, and yet I am glad that you have her to be your little companion while I am out here. I shall wait for your letter telling me of her doings today and what you gave to her for our present with much interest. I suppose I will receive it before Xmas.

Yesterday was a stormy day. It was quite an experience to hear the thunder and see the lightning, and also to have a torrential rain beating upon the tent. The noise was something awful and the wind so strong that I wouldn't have been at all surprised if the tent had been blown down around my head. However, it didn't so happen. The pegs remained firm and the tent ropes held good! It is stormy again and much cooler. We are now beginning to wear our serge khaki and woollen underclothing. I missed my bathe this morning because the sea was rough and rather dirty. But I would have faced it if I had had some cotton wool to have stuffed ears with. I must get some cotton wool today.

The services on Sunday were very well attended and were very much enjoyed, at least I speak for myself. Every available seat in the hut was occupied, both morning and evening, and at the evening service a great number were standing at the back. How these boys like to sing and how well they sing! On Sunday night, quite half an hour before the service began, they were there in large numbers, singing their favourite hymns. Then, after the service, which usually lasts 45 minutes, they remained for a further sing-song for about an hour. This happens every Sunday night. The sing-song after the Sunday evening service was commenced when I first came here, and it has never once flagged. Indeed, I am sure that interest in it increases. There are quite a number of Church of England men who come in for this sing-song.

I think something of this nature would take well at home. I mean to try it when I return. I make the thing as free and easy as possible. In fact, regularly now, in all my services, with the exception of the Sunday morning parade service, I ask my congregation to choose a hymn which they would like to sing. And they simply enjoy it. It gives them a lively interest in the service.

What do you think of the news from this Front? Don't you think it good? We are all highly pleased out here. In fact, it is better than we ever dared to hope, when the Judean Hills

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

are borne in mind. Yesterday we heard that the famous orange town⁵¹ had been occupied by our troops and I expect the capital of that province will be in our hands by the time this reaches you. I have been dreaming of singing a Christmas Carol in Bethlehem on December 25th!! It may be a wild dream, but I should like to do it. Very likely some of our troops will be privileged to do so. If we could only have that Far Eastern nation⁵² taking charge of the Caucasus (?) we would soon be able to end hostilities in this part and throughout the Turkish Empire. However, we never know what will happen these days. But the next six months will be full of big movements.

I don't expect we shall remain here much longer, but will have to move up North, nearer to our Troops. When it comes, I sincerely hope it will be well into Palestine. Rumours are plentiful. I have just had two splendid souvenirs of this front given to me. They are two photo frames made out of a Turkish aeroplane propeller, made by Egyptians who are carpenters from Jerusalem. I have put you in one and Kathleen in another.

I am sending you some photographs today, in which I hope you will be able to recognize your humble servant. They are sent as Xmas cards with my very best wishes. One of the photos, Camels, Pyramids and Sphinx is for Kate, the other two are for you. I hope they will reach you safely and unsoiled. It will be a nice memento of my stay out here. I heard from several afterwards that the photographer was making a grand display of this "Camel" photo for weeks after, and think it was a good advertisement for him. Ahem!! He took great care with us, and personally I think it is well done. Don't you dearest?

I am waiting to hear from you again, my love! I am always waiting!! But there have been no letters from you since last Thursday. However, your letters are always worth waiting for. My patience is always amply rewarded. I hope Kitty hasn't lost the use of her right hand! It is so long time since I heard from her.

I am without a watch at present, and it is very awkward. My wretched watch is under repairs and has been there for nine weeks. It is at Port Said. I am wondering if that old silver watch of mine is in your possession. If it is, I shall be very glad if you would have it repaired and sent out to me. I don't want to buy another if I can possibly avoid it.

I am wonderfully well at present. Hope you are all still keeping well. Again, I trust that Kathleen is having a very Happy Birthday. If her Daddy's good thoughts can do anything for her, then she will certainly have a most enjoyable day.

Very many kisses to her and warmest love to you from your fond Hubby.

⁵¹ Jaffa

⁵² Russia

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER XLI

36th Stationary Hospital,

E.E.F.

Nov. 26th, 1917

My Dearest,

I am writing again before receiving another letter from you. So, I have very little to write about and certainly no news to send. I have not had any letters of any kind since I had your last one, so you can imagine me feeling rather dull. I sincerely hope there will be quite a nice bundle in the next mail to compensate for this long period of silence. However, there is one great comfort: to know that the days and weeks are passing all the same, and I will be very glad when the year has rolled by.

By the time this scribble reaches you, I hope the photographs have reached you safely and without being soiled. And, surely, the two parcels sent with Sister Poole have reached by this! I must honestly admit that the time is hanging rather heavily now. I wish it wouldn't. I vary my days as much as I can. Now, since the cooler weather has come in, I have my bathe in the morning, breakfast; four mile walk immediately after breakfast; then letter writing, or preparation for meetings on Sunday; lunch; afternoon is taken up with odds and ends; from 5 o/c to 7 o/c or 7:30 visiting the hospital wards; dinner, then a meeting or anything else that's taking place. I am always in bed shortly after 9 o/c each night. The important things, after doing one's duty, is to keep physically fit. I am glad to say that I have never been more fit than now. Some think I am putting on weight. What do you think, dearest, from the photographs sent to you? If I am stouter, I am no worse for it.

I had quite a nice ride on Saturday afternoon on my favourite pony "Bessie". I went along the beach for nearly 3 miles, then turned into the desert by the side of a gypsum lake, which is practically one mass of crystals — salt solidified. With the brilliant sun shining upon it, it was like a crystal sea. It was most pretty. In the midst of it I saw a fox, but I couldn't get near it because of the uneven and roughness of the surface of the dried-up lake. Further on, I saw a vulture which seemed to defy me and my horse with its wicked eye. I suppose they are quite harmless when alone but, when hungry and in a drove, they have been known to attack. There are several odd ones about this neighbourhood now. The constant wonder is how all these creatures get food on this most barren desert. I suppose they live on each other. Only a few miles away, there were some jackals a few nights ago and they made a terrible noise. So, you can imagine a bit what kind of land we are in. And we are glad of anything which will break the monotony of our daily round.

The services yesterday were very enjoyable and well attended, in spite of several hundreds of men less in the hospital than a week ago. The subject for our Bible Class this week will be "The Bible in the Light of the War." I am introducing it and we expect a good meeting.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

What a splendid victory we have had in France. Blows like that at the German positions are bound to tell wonderfully in our favour on the Western Front, and lead one to expect more than ever that, before very long, the enemy will be obliged to retire from France and Belgium. What a great blessing that would be! And what we really hope for, if the War has to continue, that it will now be fought in Germany itself. They have been clever enough so far to have kept the fighting outside their own country. Italy seems steadier now, but Russia is the black horse of the Allies.

Well now, my dearest, I have written a fair amount, but I have said very little, I am afraid. When I receive your letter, I will write to you at once. Hope Kathleen had a very Happy Birthday.

Trust you are all keeping well. Love to Kate and all the others. Kisses for my girlie and warmest and fondest love to you my darling.

Yours always,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

36th Stationary Hospital,
E.E.F.

Nov. 27th, 1917

My Dearest,

I had quite a good time last night, for we had a mail in and three of your letters were in it. There were 3 more besides, and one week's papers. It was a very pleasant time for me, I can assure you. I went to bed with very lively and warm thoughts of you. I was glad to know that the concert went so well and that Kathleen did her part so nicely. But what a pity you were not able to be there. The financial result was excellent!! The C.E. anniversary was evidently also a success, and it was quite cheering to hear of 40 deciding for Christ on Young People's Day. And so, you are beginning a Junior Endeavour? A very good thing, no doubt, and I hope you will meet with great success. I often think of those meetings in Witney with great joy and the memory of them brings me cheer. I hope you have plenty of help, for I know how much that is required.

I am very glad and very much relieved to know that the last parcels have reached you safely. I am also pleased that they give you and all so much pleasure. That is a great comfort! I look forward to seeing you in your new costume in the Spring, and Kathleen and Winifred adorned in their Egyptian linen also. I am glad you like the brass work. I thought the gong would be most acceptable to you. I keep gathering a few things together, but these for certain must be retained until I return. They will possibly make me more welcome when I do return!! Eh?

I am interested to hear of your many visitors. It must keep you all busy, but it will keep you cheerful. I have never had the joy of hearing the Rev. M. Guy Pearse. I have often wished to hear him. You must have had a very good time. I am delighted to hear that Kathleen is so keen on going to school and that she is making such good progress. What a change must be taking place in her little life!

I am very glad to know that you are so passive in your attitude about my staying out here another year. Of course, it is so difficult to decide quite definitely what to do when more than four months have to pass before my year is up. But, for the last month, I have had the increasing conviction that I ought to return to England at the end of my year, then renew my contract (if they will allow me!) for home service, or in France. Either of these I am quite prepared to do. This is after very careful consideration. More than this I cannot say now, for conditions and the general situation may change. Everything seems in a state of change when at War. And what I am most anxious to do is to have a talk with you upon the whole thing. For such vital matters are quite unsatisfactory when we do it by correspondence. Then, after twelve months out here I am due for home leave.

I went to the concert last night which was given by the patients. It was very good. Of course, as usual, it was given out of doors with a glorious moon shining. It was not at all

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

cold. We are fortunate in having some good singers and actors, including an excellent pianist and violinist. It lasted two hours. Today, this afternoon, I am going along the beach for a little picnic. There will be five of us, two Sisters, a pathologist and two padres. What a company! The two Sisters have invited us. Then, tomorrow, we always take tea at the tennis court. The Sisters provide the tea tomorrow, and our mess on alternate Wednesdays. We have a football match or a cricket match almost every day now. The patients are now convalescent, at least half of them, so they enter into these games most heartily. So, after all, in spite of our isolation, we do have something sometimes to relieve the monotony.

There are some very nice boys in the hospital at present. There are several from Durham county and Newcastle. There is a very fine young fellow who is a United Methodist. His father is a minister in Chichester and he himself was a candidate for the ministry before the War. I have had one or two nice talks with him. Going my rounds in the wards, it has been most cheering to hear words of appreciation of the helpful services held on Sundays. Such appreciation comes from all kinds, Presbyterians, Congregational, Baptist, Methodist and Salvation Army. But we know no distinction out here between denominations. I wish this was really so at home. Much more good would then be achieved.

Now I think that I have said quite enough for the present, having written only yesterday. You will no doubt receive both letters together. So, good bye, my darling. Keep a brave heart. We shall win our way through this War

“For right is right, since God is God;
And right the day must win;
To doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin.”

Love to Kate and all the rest. Kisses for my girlie and warmest affection for my own darling. From

Your fond Hubby.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

MOBILE UNITS

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

21st Corps,
Head Quarters,
E.E.F.
December 3rd, 1917

My Dearest,

Since I last wrote to you I have changed my place of abode. I am quite 180 miles further north, so you can guess where I am. The present situation is very pretty and a welcome change from the desert. The hills are on our right and the city almost behind us. I am not sure whether I will be staying here or be posted to a unit in the neighbourhood. I must wait a few days to see. If I am meant to remain here, then I have had the honour of being appointed to superintend the other U.B.⁵³ chaplains in the whole corps. I am not sending my letter until I know definitely where I shall be for the next few months.

I left the 36th Stationary Hospital on Thursday. A little farewell meeting was held on Wednesday night. There was a splendid company. I received my orders quite suddenly on Tuesday night, and unexpectedly, for I was feeling sure that I had been forgotten. However, it was evidently not so. The change is a welcome one. The other chaplains and the hospital envied me. Many of the hospital staff and also many patients said some very nice things. The Matron and Colonel were not behind in their kind words. They, with many others, came to the station to say goodbye to me. It was comforting to know that my work there for six months had been watched and appreciated.

Thursday, I spent in Port Said, having to go there for my watch, which had been in the watchmaker's hands for ten weeks. The watchmakers out here are nothing else but thieves and deceivers. Ten minutes after I left Port Said in the train, the watch stopped again, and I soon found that it had been badly handled. So, I am no better off at present! And I shall be glad when you can send that old watch out to me.

I was travelling all night until noon of Friday, entering Palestine early in the morning. It was wonderfully interesting to see trees and fields again; I shall never forget the first sight of the Judean hills. The city of Samson⁵⁴ was also interesting and that not least because so many of our men had done so valiantly, to drive back the enemy. Since there, there are evidences of a hasty retreat by the enemy. There are many things, of course, I cannot mention here, but I am making a note of them. The natives, men, women and children are very keen in selling their oranges. And what oranges! I cannot tell you how many I have had. There are orange groves all round here. They are real Jaffas!

I am now messing with Majors & Colonels, so I must be on my best behaviour. I am having to rough it a bit now, sleeping on the sand in my valise, with a bivouac for a covering for the Sun by day and the Moon by night. I never had my clothes off for 3

⁵³ United Board

⁵⁴ Gaza?

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

nights. I reached here on Saturday. Last night I had a very good sleep. But if I am remaining here, I will send for my camp bed and the rest of my kit, which I thought prudent to leave behind. One has to travel as light as one can, in case one is with a mobile unit.

Now I don't want you to worry about me, for there is really no need to. I am quite safe and I have been sent here, so that means a kindly Providence will watch over me. I am confident of this. I am still a good many miles behind the Line. I leave this to finish some other time, so goodbye for the moment.

Thursday

I am still waiting for orders. What I feel most is to remain at one place all the time when, if only I had a horse, I could see the neighbouring villages. Roads are very bad, so that there is really no pleasure in walking across soft sandy and ploughed-up fields. However, on Tuesday morning, I walked nearly four miles across the fields to a Jewish colony where there is a shop or two. There are lots of children in the colony. The grown-ups are friendly. They speak Arabic and French. The French is the prevailing language for business. I often have wished that I could speak French. My education has been neglected! Crossing the fields, the grasshoppers were to be seen in abundance. Then, near the Colony, were the vineyards, orange and lemon groves, as well as almond and eucalyptus groves. All around, one can see the Arabs busy ploughing in the usual primitive fashion, one with a camel and another with a yoke of oxen with peculiarly shaped ploughs. The dress of the Jewish women and also the Arabs is most quaint. The Jewish women are dressed in a garment which is all patchwork, all colours of the rainbow. Others are really dressed like Europeans. But the Arab women are attired in black flowing garments and with veiled faces. The gaudy colours are worn by the men among the Arabs, with camel's hair bound around their turbans.

Your letters will be longer in reaching me now, dearest. I hope your parcel will reach me safely. It is now a week ago since I left the stationary hospital. I have not been able to get any films for my camera, just when I really need them most. I feel awfully annoyed about it. There is so much that one could take here of greatest interest. However, I may be able to get some soon, then you will have some Palestinian snapshots.

I am writing this scribble on my knee as I sit on an old bully beef box. I have put aside all luxuries for the present. It is surprising what one can really do without! How I shall appreciate civilized living when I get back home. Still, there is pleasure in doing this now, because of the practical experience it gives of what so very many are passing through at present.

We had showers of rain last night, but I was very grateful to have a covering for my head, although the tent leaked somewhat. That I had to manoeuvre, and did so with success. Today the air is cooler and pleasanter. I have a new batman: my other was not strong

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

enough to come with me, for which I was really sorry. He did very well for me. But this present one promises to do very well for me.

I am now sending this letter off to you, so you can have a little news to be going on with. As soon as ever I am definitely posted, I will write you. At the present

“Headquarters”
21st Corps E.E.F.

will find me quicker than sending to the old address. This scribble will reach you just about Xmas. Well, my darling, I hope you will have a very happy Xmas and New Year. You will certainly be in my thoughts and my heart then. May you all have great enjoyment. I will likely have a plum pudding somewhere and, I hope, a nice bundle of letters from you and others.

Love to all of you. Kisses for my Kathleen and warmest love to my darling.

Yours most affectionately,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Head Quarters,
XXIst Corps
Cavalry Regt.,
E.E.F.
Dec. 11th, 1917

My Darling,

I know you will be anxious to hear of my whereabouts and so I hasten to write a few lines. I am perfectly happy and feel quite safe. As you will see, I am posted with the Corps Cavalry and my work will be well behind the Line. I am pleased with my appointment. It will give me a great deal of travelling, as there are other mobile units which will come under my care. Of course, comforts are out of all consideration. I am glad to have a good sleeping bag and valise. The thing is to keep warm at nights: it gets very cold then. However, I will harden to that. I am glad to say that I have never really felt better in my life. So much in the open air and cooler weather will explain this. Last week we had a heavy rainfall, but yesterday and today is glorious again. Imagine me sitting in an almond grove at 9 o/c in the morning, writing this to you. Behind me are the hills and around me, lovely, rolling country, with various kinds of groves as far as the eye can reach. Overhead, aeroplanes making their journeys, and throbbing of guns which break the morning stillness. Within a stone's throw are some Bedouins in their mud hut. Of course, everything is vastly different from my life of the last seven months. There are no luxuries whatsoever. I am sincerely hoping that your Xmas parcel will reach me safely. I have not had any of your letters for a fortnight now. They will come soon, no doubt.

I had a letter from Mrs. Townsend a fortnight ago. They are all well now. Her son Wilfred is now in training. She is kept very busy at Corn St. I am so glad that she has kept at work there. I must admit that I felt rather fearful about her staying there after we had taken our leave from the circuit. However, perhaps the special circumstances under which we left may have been the means of keeping her steadfast.

I heard from Mr. Iles last week. The Purley Church is sending a parcel of comforts for the Boys. It is now on its way. It is very kind of them to do so. It was done on the suggestion of Mr. Iles. They got more things than they could send out in one parcel, so another parcel will follow later. I have also heard from Mr. Iles' son Reg., who is now in Cairo finishing his training. I ought to see him soon.

I have not met Mr. Horne yet, nor Mr. Shepherd. I hope to very soon, now that I am having a horse today.

It is surprising to know that it is only a fortnight today until Xmas Day! And to think that I won't be with you!! However, it will be impossible to forget you. To think that I shall be in the country where our Lord was born, and only within almost a day's good marching of Bethlehem itself! It was certainly unthinkable last Xmas.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Now I must really stop my scribble for the present. I will write you again soon. How delightful to know that the holy city has been taken by us. I hope you are well and also Kathleen. Love to Kate and the rest. Kisses to my girlie and warmest and fondest love to you.

Yours ever,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Head Quarters,
XXIst Corps
Cavalry Reg.
E.E.F.
Dec. 12th, 1917

Dearest Nance,

Your letter of November 12 just received. Many thanks for it. Although I wrote only yesterday and gave you all the news I could send, I am writing you again. I may finish it tonight, or it may be tomorrow. My news to you now must be very limited, as you will quite understand. And it will possibly be very scrappy. I expect you are keeping some of these letters, if not all, and what is missing now I will fill up when I see your beloved face!

If I have not written to you repeatedly of my Sunday services, it is because they are all very much the same. Perhaps I will now have more variety. The units I have to minister to are scattered all around the countryside, as far as 8, 10 and 12 miles away. Of course, it will be impossible to make a journey there and back in one day on horseback. There are 3 anti-aircraft sections on my list, for instance. I went in search for them this afternoon. I got to one section, which was not mine, within 5 yards of the guns, when the alarm was given that an enemy plane was approaching. I cleared off only a few yards to the rear when the guns opened a terrific fire which soon drove off the Taube⁵⁵. The horse was naturally a little restive but I held him in and, when they ceased, the horse was glad to move away from that zone. There was an air-fight yesterday afternoon. I really didn't care to look at it. It was at a very high altitude, and was clearly to be seen. Our airman had the better of the game. He wisely made off when another Taube came along. So, you can quite understand that there is not the same stillness and monotony here as at the last place. We are quite secure. We are out of the range of shell fire and I have my dugout.

For the last two Sundays, not having a unit, I attended the C. of E. service. The first Sunday night, I read the lesson. Last Sunday night I gave the address. I may say that services are difficult to hold at present because everyone is so busy. Services are held when convenient. There is movement everywhere.

The Major here is very nice. He is a Baptist. He has promised to help me all he can. The rest of the officers and men are Scottish, and therefore mostly Presbyterians. We are five in the mess. We are roughing it in proper style. We have bully more or less at each meal. The others have parcels sent to them, which makes a little change. One thing, my mess bills won't be so high as at the hospital. So, on that, I hope to save a little more. No cups and saucers now, but mugs and enamel plates, served up on a wooden table without a tablecloth. One plate has to serve for everything. It is a mobile unit and therefore cannot

⁵⁵ Model of German reconnaissance aircraft

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

collect much to make the mess more comfortable. For seats we have old boxes. We breakfast at 7 o/c, lunch at 1, tea at 4 and dinner at 6. The first night I was in bed (dugout, I mean) at 8 o/c, last night by 8:30. There are no fires and one is glad to turn in to keep warm. This one can do, sometimes!

I was not able to finish my letter last night, so resume it early in the morning. Your letter was very welcome. How nice to have a little letter from my pet. I am very pleased with it and will certainly preserve it. I do hope she won't have trouble with her teeth. She was quite brave to let Clifford pull the old one out. It was a cheap extraction! It would be good business to make a contract with Clifford to extract each one when necessary at a penny a time, eh? How fortunate you are in being able to go to the concerts at the Guildhall. I can quite imagine you wanting very much to live in some large town when I resume normal conditions. I am glad to have your opinion about my term in the Army. I noticed the note in the Leader about chaplains. I was very much surprised to see it. That fact ought to make it all the easier for me to receive a home appointment. I must say that I am prepared to renew my contract, but I fully intend returning to England at the end of my term. It must be very difficult to live, for many of our ministers. We are certainly alright in that respect now. I am very glad to know that Kate and Wilson are. I hope that they will always be in such a happy condition. But, somehow, I cannot help thinking that the most distressing time will come after the War has ended.

I may say that I am using my British Warmer⁵⁶ now, at nights. It gets very cold. It is as warm as English summer weather during the day, but it goes to the other extreme at nights. These extremes of weather are what makes it very trying. But, so long as I can keep dry, I shall be quite well. I am not yet wearing all my Winter clothes, but by next week I think I will. This kind of weather will last, I suppose, until the end of January. I expect my serge will be quite respectable when I come home and so you will be able to take me to some of the fashionable Plymouth cafes without being ashamed of my dress. Of course, there must be some signs of active service. What say you? Now the postman is waiting to take my letter. I have not received Kate's letter yet. Love to Kate and the others. Kisses for Kathleen and warmest love to you, my darling.

Yours ever,
Dick.

⁵⁶ Type of woollen overcoat

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Head Quarters,
21st Corps
Cavalry Regt.,
E.E.F.
Dec. 18th /17

My Dearest,

Since I last wrote to you we have removed our camp from an olive grove, which was nicely sheltered, to an open, bleak and barren country which is only 3 miles away. It ought to be very healthy here, but it is very cold, mornings and evenings. Since changing our camp there has been a strong wind blowing, which was particularly violent last night. There was not much sleep. Every minute I expected my "bivvy"⁵⁷ going up in the air. However, it bore the strain. I should imagine we shall have rain very soon. When that starts again, I don't know what we will really do.

We are just outside a Jewish colony. We were all hoping that we would be put into billets. No such fortune yet, however. That may come later! My batman was telling me yesterday that there is a woman (Jewess) in the village who used to live in Manchester and she speaks good English. Isn't it really wonderful! This morning, walking into the village, one of the colony surprised me by saluting me with "Good Morning" in real good English fashion.

I had a service last Sunday morning. I only had 30 present, for the squadron is very much split up at present. We had a nice little service in the open. My congregation was entirely Scotch. The singing was only moderately good; but I did my best to give them a good lead. My subject was "Jesus Christ, the First and the Last", which I thought would fitly prepare for next Sunday, when I propose preaching a Christmas sermon. How fortunate I am to be so near the sacred spot where our dear Lord was born! It gives new interest as well as new meaning to Christmastide. But, at the same time, how I shall miss you a week today. It is 14 or 15 years that we have been together for Christmas. This time is to be the exception. I shall miss you all very much. However, Easter will soon be here now!!

It is a week ago since I heard from you. I suppose there are several letters on their way to me. I wish they would come. I feel very lonely without some news from you. Your Christmas parcel has not reached me yet. Some of the officers have recently received parcels which were sent from England on August 29th. So, I cannot complain yet, eh?

With the recent push, everything has had to stand aside for the transport of munitions. To make an advance, in some places, of 60 miles in two or three weeks meant a great strain on every means of transport. Now things are becoming easier, and unless there is another push we will settle down and be able to get our mails regularly.

⁵⁷ Bivouac

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Whilst I am well up to the Front Line now, yet I am sufficiently far back to be out of reach of shell fire. So please don't worry about my safety. I am as happy as a schoolboy! One day last week I had a very fine experience. There was a "strafe" on, and from one of the hills near I could overlook the valley; and by the aid of a good pair of glasses I could see the shells bursting, and ultimately saw our men go over the parapet and capture their objective. It was a great sight, yet there was an element of sadness in it all, although our men were successful, for some of our men must have fallen, though our losses were light.

I am hoping sometime soon to have a trip to Jerusalem. That would be splendid, wouldn't it? If I do go there at all, I will get you a memento of my visit. If there is anything to be got from any other place at any time, you may rest assured I will get it. I shall be very glad when I get some films, so as to take a few snapshots of the places of interest and the people. These would be very interesting for days to come.

I heard from Mr. Shepherd a few days ago. He is keeping well and has passed right through the last battle with only two days sickness. Where he is now I cannot tell, but I am hoping to meet him soon in the course of my travels. There are several batteries placed on my list and, in looking for these, which frequently change their location, I may find Mr. Shepherd. Mr. Horne is not far away, but I have not met him yet. I find that it will be most difficult to get the men together for a service. They are all Corps troops and constantly on the move. It will be impossible to have fixed times for services similar to those held at the stationary hospital. However, I must do what I can and not worry.

I often wonder what kind of winter you are having. I hope it won't be so cold as it was last winter. I expect Kathleen has finished her first term at school. I shall be glad to know what the teachers report of her. Her note in your last letter (Nov. 12th) was a surprise to me. If she really did that herself, she has certainly done very well. You seem to be very active again. I am glad you have made a beginning with the Junior C.E. One thing out here has struck me very forcibly: the great importance of looking after the boys and girls and giving them Biblical teaching. It is amazing, the general ignorance of the men in Bible history.

Now I must end my chatter. I am afraid it is not very interesting. It seems to be very much muddled. But it is just as I feel at the moment, for I have a little cold in the head which is really the first I have had since I left England. So, I count myself most fortunate. I will try to write you a better epistle next time.

I enclose you a snapshot of myself as I really was during the summer weather, outside my bell tent. What do you think of it?

Love to Kate, Wilson and the children. Heaps of kisses to Kathleen and warmest and fondest love to you, my darling.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Yours ever, Dick.

JAFFA

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER XLVII
Head Quarters,
21st Corps
Heavy Artillery,
E.E.F.
Xmas Day 1917

My Dearest,

I am not hearing from you at present. It is because I have been moving a good deal for the last month. Now I have made another change. I came here yesterday. The day was not at all pleasant. Heavy rain and a strong wind made it anything but a happy journey. However, I kept fairly dry. I rode on horseback and my kit was on a pack horse. I was glad, as a matter of fact, to leave my last place. The weather was simply merciless and we were camping in an open field without the slightest shelter. It was the greatest difficulty to keep the bivouac intact. I am to say that I did so. Owing to the sudden change of weather and coming so far North, I contracted a cold. That is now better though.

What a peculiar Xmas Day I am having. Nothing like the old-fashioned ones. Can you imagine me today taking charge of an old Turkish chateau, surrounded with orange groves laden with the best Jaffas? There are six rooms on the first floor and they cannot have been used for a few years. The owner has vanished long ago. There is a keeper with his wives and family living below. The room I have taken is larger than the Whitney dining room and twice as high. I expect two more officers coming and sharing the house very soon. It will be much better when they come. My batman is also staying in the house. The only bit of furniture I can use is an old couch, which is going to be my bed (only it is very narrow; I am afraid that I shall have to strap myself to the couch). Then there is a clock. After a little careful handling, I have managed to make it go. This clock is very useful indeed, for I am without a watch still. I mess across at the headquarters, which is in a fine chateau. The Colonel is a fine old man. He has been kind enough to place a motor-car at my disposal, or a horse. This has cheered me up wonderfully, because many units I have to visit are a considerable distance away. I forgot to tell you that I am billeted just outside of Jaffa. Jaffa itself is a very nice town (so far as Palestine goes). On Saturday, I rode on horseback from my last camp, which was really 8 miles each way. Another officer and I had luncheon in the Jerusalem Hotel, which is an excellent place. The proprietor (a German) has vanished, but someone else is carrying on. The amusing part about it is that the rooms upstairs are all named after Old Testament characters — Moses, Miriam, Isaac etc. Then I went to the house of Simon the Tanner, where Peter had his dream. It is questioned whether this is the original house, but it is believed to be the "site", at least. However, I climbed up some rickety stairs and managed onto the roof of the house, overlooking the sea, and tried to picture Peter and the men waiting for him down below.

I hope I am settled down now for some little time. This is the third move in less than a month. Possibly I will remain here a few months. Of course, everything will depend on

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

the nature of operations. But we can do just as we wish here now. Because of the awful weather and so many men on duty on Sunday, I was not able to hold a service then, nor have I been able to hold one today, owing to my recent arrival. So, I am holding Xmastide in a peculiar way. Perhaps the New Year will be better.

I was very glad to hear from Kate. I was pleased indeed for the "Xmas Greetings" she sent. I hope you are all having the happiest of times. I shall wait with interest to hear what Kathleen got in her stocking. Did you hang yours up?

I hope to hear from you soon, darling. I do miss your letters so. Your parcel has not yet come. I hear that there are many parcels waiting along the Line. It will probably reach me soon. Thanks to Clifford for his card.

Love to Kate, Wilson, Winifred and Clifford. Kisses for my Kathleen and fondest affection to my darling.

Yours ever,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

H.Q.
21st Corps H.A.⁵⁸
E.E.F.
December 31st /17

My Dearest,

I write you again without having heard from you. It is now some long time since I had any news. I hope soon to have quite a large batch from you and everybody else. I am simply pining away in my heart for news from you. Other things I suppose are more urgent for the carrying on of the War than our letters, and the most important things take first place. The weather has been so bad that I think transport has been made very difficult. Hence the delay of many things.

I am still in Jaffa among the orange groves. It is simply glorious. The town itself looks most beautiful from my chateau. The oranges are delicious. They are so large and so juicy. Trees are laden. I have never had any like them before. I am sure Winifred and Wilson would simply revel among these oranges. I never knew that I could eat so many of them without disliking them. I have at least half a dozen a day. Never seen such oranges in England.

I have a great deal of movement now. Last week, I was out each day looking for various units. Twice on horseback and twice in the motor-car. There are some rather pretty places. On Friday and Saturday, I passed through a German colony which is quite picturesque. No Germans there now, of course. There are several Jewish and German colonies in the neighbourhood. The Jews are from all over the world — Russia, Poland, Finland, America, Spain, France, Germany etc. They are prosperous villages, apparently. How much better it would be if we were not here for purposes of War. There were a great number who were able to go to Bethlehem for Xmas Day for a service; I believe it was held in a Roman Catholic church; the service lasted 3 hours. Then, after the service, all were led to the supposed place where our Lord was born. I suppose the service was most impressive. I wish I could have been there. I hope before very long to go there and also to Jerusalem, when opportunity and a motor-car present themselves.

I often think and repeat these words of the Psalmist: "Unto the hills I lift mine eyes". They stand so majestically and look so grand from the plain. There are more hills beyond, I believe, and the further we go North, the more mountainous it becomes. Mt. Tabor can be discerned quite clearly most days, just North of Jerusalem. I long to be on Olivet, from which one gets a splendid view of this plain, and on the other side of Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea.

⁵⁸ Heavy Artillery

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Christmas was very quiet for me, having just changed my quarters the day before. But now I am more settled. Yesterday I was able to hold a service in the evening, after the men had finished a very long day's work. There were about 30 present. We had no instrument to lead the singing, but I did what I could by way of a lead and the singing went very well indeed. I hope to hold a concert tonight. The difficulty is a piano. I thought it would be a change for the men after two months strenuous pushing. I did arrange another service for yesterday morning, but this unit had to move forward during the early morning and so no service could be had. It is frightfully difficult to hold services at present while there is so much activity.

I heard again from Flossie Viner last week. She writes most cheerfully. She told me she had been out, I suppose in a bath chair⁵⁹. She told me that her cousin from Canada, Oscar, had been killed in France. Also, that Mr. Horace, who has been with Mr. Viner for 35 years, has died.

Well, here we are on the last day of the old year. I hope most sincerely that the new year 1918 will bring an end to these awful hostilities. What a blessing it would be to hear that Peace has been declared. We have rumours here of new German Peace Proposals. I hope they will be reasonable enough to form a working basis to bring the War to an end. Everyone longs for it out here.

I hope you are having a happy Festive Season. I am quite out of it this time, but I hope that my present experiences will help me to carry out my work more effectively in the future. Hope you are quite well, darling; also, Kathleen. I was glad to learn from Kate that you were really better. I am quite well. In spite of the recent heavy rains, the weather is really English weather at its best.

Now, goodbye, darling. Give my love to Kate etc. Kisses for Kathleen and warmest love to you, my darling.

Your fond hubby,
Dick.

⁵⁹ Light carriage for one person

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Headquarters,
XXIst Corps
Heavy Artillery,
E.E.F.
Jan. 4th, 1918

My Darling,

I was very pleased to receive your Xmas parcels yesterday. I began to think that they would not reach me until the end of this month. However, it is not so. They are both in good condition. Thanks to you, my dear pet, for your parcel of sweets and books. Both are very welcome to me. It is such a delight to taste a sweet and chocolate again. While I have not yet begun to take sugar in my tea, I am very fond of something sweet, much more than before. The books I will read as soon as possible. All three look as if they will be interesting reading. Thanks very much, my darling, for your kind remembrances and good wishes. Thanks also to Kate and Wilson for their book. How very strange: the book they have sent me "The Meaning of Prayer" is one I have wished for, for some long time. The chocolates from Clifford are very nice and good, the peppermints from Winifred are very acceptable. So, to everyone, my very best thanks!

Now I am having my Xmas and New Year's Day together, trying all the sweets to see if they are good; and they are, I can assure!! When I can snatch a little quiet time, then the books will come in for closer attention. New Year's Day was very quiet, just like an ordinary day. I did duty, just the same as usual. It happened to be rather a stormy day. Yesterday and today have simply been glorious.

Well, my darling, I have not had a letter from you for the last 4 weeks. Your last was dated Nov. 12. There have not been any papers either. I must keep patient. But we are glad to get our rations. That is more important. Still, I think we will soon have mails quite regularly. You see, we are so far away from our base, and we cannot win territory very well without extending our line of communication.

There is very little to buy in Jaffa at present. The shops seemed to have been quite cleared out, long before we arrived. But now the people are returning and opening up their businesses. There has been a great improvement during the last few days. And the natives are returning every day — no one knows from where. The various forms of dress are very interesting. Some women have no veil at all. Others have a white cloth over their head, showing only their eyes, and others have a very black face-covering, and no line of the features can be seen at all. As for their other part of dress, it is beyond description. Some have clogs for footwear, others have nothing for their feet. Most have pantaloons (or perhaps there is another name for them) with a brilliant patch-worked garment, which is usually in tatters, down to the knees. The weights and bulky bundles they, the women, carry on their heads is simply wonderful. The man, who is apparently very lazy, walks

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

in front of the woman, or perhaps rides on the poor donkey. I took one or two snapshots when in Jaffa this morning.

I have arranged to hold two services around here on Sunday. The Motor Transport section have not had a service for about 9 months. They are very pleased to have a service arranged them. I met one of the old patients of the 36th Stationary Hospital yesterday, and he has promised to come to the service on Sunday night. I find that the service of last Sunday night was highly appreciated. The Corporal in charge of the men I have found is a P.M. from Armhope, Staffs. I am holding another service there on Sunday night.

I am really waiting for my horse to arrive, so as to get around to the various units round here. Up to the present, I have had to borrow a horse when I require one. Perhaps the horse I expect soon will turn out to be a mule! I don't mind if it is not too stupid. They are in great use out here and much better than a horse in many ways.

I shall be glad to hear from you again, for I am anxious to know how you all are and that you have had a good time at Xmas and the New Year. So, my dearest, send me full and frequent accounts of all you do. I simply pine for letters from you!! Do you see the Daily News at all? I often wish to see the Saturday's issue.

Love to you all; heaps of kisses to my dear girlie, and fondest love to you, my darling.

Yours ever fondly in love,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Headquarters,
XXIst Corps
Heavy Artillery,
E.E.F.
Jan. 8th, 1918

My Darling Nance,

At last, I have received another letter from you, which is dated Nov. 20th. So, you can see it has been on the way quite a long time. It has really been eight weeks in reaching me. The letter and envelope was just hanging together. It has marks upon it of having weathered many a rain-storm and a good deal of mud. Letters are coming through to us very badly at present. A letter was written to me on the line of communication on Dec. 21st, which only reached me today. However, I keep cheerful and feel confident that there is a heap of letters waiting for me somewhere.

I sincerely hope that your cold has completely left you by now, and that you were able to sing according to arrangement. Kate's letter reached me a fortnight ago and was really written later than yours. Isn't it strange how letters get mixed up, even when they are sent on at the same time! It seems a very long time ago since I wrote wishing Kathleen very good wishes for her birthday. I am glad she had such a happy day. And what a lot of presents she had! How kind everyone has been in thinking of our little pet!! I am interested to hear so much about her. How nice to know that she likes her school so much, and also her teacher. I expect to see a great change in her when I return. I cannot help but remember her words "Daddy must not stay another year." I must see her and you, my darling, as soon as possible. If I were in France, I would be able to see you every few months and only be a day's journey from you. If it is not possible to have a home appointment, I am quite willing to go to France. I expect to hear something from the Principal Chaplain soon now. It is really an amazing thing about Mrs. Newstead. It will be a great delight to all the Newsteads, and especially to Mrs Newstead, for her to be able to get about again. I sincerely hope that the specialist's prediction is fulfilled!

I had a card from Rev. Horne a few days ago. He is now in hospital with a sore throat. He hopes to be back soon.

I am now running a mess for other two beside myself. We were getting rather crowded at headquarters and so the Colonel suggested we should, and asked me to see to it. We were glad to have this suggestion from the Colonel, in fact, because for all our meals we had nearly ten minutes' walk through an orange grove, which is neither very pleasant nor safe at night time. Add to this the time it took going to and coming from the place, as well as a great deal of waiting before meals. Now we can go our own sweet way and save no end of time. The style is not very grand yet, but we are getting things together nicely. One of the batmen cooks fairly well and the other looks after the serving. I am president and secretary for the mess. I have bought a primus stove, so we each have one now. These

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

will do the necessary cooking. How would you like to cook for the new mess, dearie? How jolly it will be when I once more enjoy the fruits of your cooking. There are very few luxuries now. Too much on active service for that!!

We have changed out house today, about half a mile from the old place. We are still among the orange groves and now near the main road, which is better in every way. The other two officers are kept very busy. They are A.S.C. M.T. officers, in connection with the Heavy Artillery. Their work, of course, is very important and there are many callers. Their names are Capt. Saunders and Lt. Morriss. Both are expecting promotion. Morriss knows Witney and the Moggs who lived at Staple Hall. He is a friend of Lt. Ward, who became engaged to a Miss Mogg. They are both very nice fellows and we get on very well together.

The new house is a bungalow. It has a large, central hall with two rooms at each side. Capt. Saunders has one, Lt. Morriss and I share another. Another is used for our mess room and the fourth, our batmen and clerks use. So, we are a happy family. There is plenty of room for stabling.

The services on Sunday were very helpful; the men and officers were pleased to see me. I am happily surprised at the way the officers and men appreciate one's work. It is most encouraging. I have promised to take the Y.M.C.A. service in Jaffa on Sunday night. They are expecting the Rev. John MacNeil (?) in Jaffa soon. Already the Y.M.C.A. have a fine hostel here and also a cinema hall and several other things for the good of the men. I am prepared to sacrifice a great deal in order to help the work of the Y.M.C.A. I wonder if you could send them a donation when there is an opportunity — I mean, when they make their next appeal.

Now I must bring my remarks to a close. I hope soon to have more letters from you, then I will write again. I am enjoying your Xmas gift — The Trail of the Axe — It's very well written.

Hope you are all well. Love to all. Kisses for my dear pet and warmest love for my darling.

Your fond and affectionate
Hubby.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

H.Q.⁶⁰
XXIst Corps
Heavy Artillery
E.E.F.
Jan. 10/18

My Darling,

I am very pleased that I had another letter from you this morning, dated Dec. 2nd. I am sorry that you had to allow a week to pass without sending me a letter. However, the circumstances completely justified the omission. The long letter, just received, helps to compensate for the missed one.

I am sorry that Kate was so unwell when you wrote. I hope by this time she has completely recovered. You seem to get as many soldiers as ever, which must add considerably to the work. You have, by your letter, quite got rid of your cold which you were struggling with on Nov. 20, seeing you were able to sing at the Choir Anniversary. I am glad you did not disgrace our name on that occasion!! The Choir concert must have been a very good affair. I would very much have liked to have heard you sing "Fairy Pipers" and "Winds in the Trees". Glad your C.E. is doing so well. I am pleased you have sent the subscription to the S.P.W. and O. Fund⁶¹. I hope Kathleen did her part well at the Speech Day at the Guildhall. I have often wondered if she was nervous at all! And how did Winifred do in her recitation? Did she uphold the good name of the family? Did you make her a dress to swank in?

Now, whilst I have missed your letters very much, I am enjoying receiving them every other day. Let 'em all come!! I also heard from Sally today. She and Granny are quite well, but they are feeling the pinch very much now. Fancy dear old Granny having to eat dry bread! How very dear everything seems! How do you really fare? I should be so glad to know, darling. We have had plenty so far and, of course, are likely to have. If we are put on short rations owing to the difficulties of transport, we can always buy a little in the neighbourhood to make up. I like the bully beef and biscuits. Only, the biscuits are rather hard and were never meant for those with false teeth. I broke a tooth the other day!!

Today has simply been glorious and the last few dry days have made the roads much better. The jackals or little foxes are just beginning their evening chant. They make a terrible noise. We are all wondering and anxiously waiting to hear what the Premier's peace proposals are. I hope most sincerely that Germany will be able to accept them, or at least make it possible for negotiations to begin. We have certainly done well here and are not finished yet!! Look to the East, don't lose hope!! Russia is certainly done, but Italy will recover and America is bound to make a great difference. She will more than make up for the loss of Russia. However, surely the War cannot last much longer, or else, what

⁶⁰ Headquarters

⁶¹ (Probably) Superannuated Preachers, Widows and Orphans

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

is going to become of us all? If only the peoples would raise their united hearts to God in prayer! And perhaps we will have to do this before the end really comes. Whilst I have never been more confident of the righteousness of the Allied cause, I am increasingly pressed down by the thought, or rather conviction, that as a nation we must bring ourselves into a more perfect harmony with the Divine Will.

I am very well with the exception of a few mosquito bites. Each bite makes a hard lump which is very itchy. However, they will go in a day or two. I don't think they are dangerous bites. Hope you are all better now. Love to all. Kisses for my girlie! Warmest and tenderest love to my own darlings!

Dick.

Friday, 11/1/18

Darling,

I am adding a little note to the letter I wrote last night. I received a telegram from the Purton Church, asking if I would accept an invitation as Superintendent Minister of Brinkworth Circuit for next July. It is caused by the death of Rev. J. Jones. After most careful thought and earnest prayer, I feel that there is only one thing for me to do: that is, to accept. I cannot help but feel that this is a Divine Call, if ever I had one, coming to me from such a distance. The cable is prepaid for a reply. I replied today, accepting it. Now, what do you think of it, dearest? There is no opportunity to have your expression of opinion before six weeks from now. And I feel sure that you would say that I must do what I felt was right, and I am convinced that this is the right thing to do. Then, I also remember the favourable impression the circuit and the people made upon you when we stayed in Purton. Let me have your free expression of opinion, my darling. We will live in Wootton Bassett, on the main G.W.R.⁶² Line. The town itself stands high and is bracing and is very healthy. It is a healthier spot than Malmesbury, and that is very important for you and Kathleen. I believe that there are one or two private schools in the town, which would carry Kathleen through the next 4 or 5 years. I miss you very much indeed to talk about the matter.

How very sorry I am to hear of Mr. Jones' death. Of course, Wilson knows him very well. He looked the picture of health, and I am wondering how the end has come. It will be very distressing to the Viners too.

The parcel of comforts for the men from Purton Church also arrived last night. It was a striking coincidence that the cable and also the practical expression of the Purton people's warm feeling should arrive at the same time. The box contained 4 pairs of socks, two shirts, two tins, a box of cigarettes and two handkerchiefs. It is a nice box of things for the men. There were also 3 Bibles. I have distributed them already and the men are most delighted with them.

⁶² Great Western Railway

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

I also received last night an appeal from the Special Finance Committee to Increase the Minister's Salaries. I suppose Wilson has got a similar appeal. The object is certainly worthy, and I wish we were in a position to send a big donation. We know what it is to be on a small salary, don't we dear? I think that if we paid 1½ per cent on £200, we had made our contribution. That would mean £3. My annual salary is £182. But the funny thing is, I have not seen Sir W. P. Hartley's Offer! and so, I really don't know what is being done by Sir William. However, I send you the promise slip for you to forward, if it meets with your approval. I hope to send you some extra money to pay for my Insurance and Preachers' Friendly and this will also cover this promise. The first instalment to this scheme is not until March 1st. What is over, I want you to send to York.

Are your finances still holding good? and do you get your cheque each month regularly?

Of course, now having expressed my willingness to accept an invitation to Brinkworth Circuit, I may remain out here until about the end of May or the early part of June, and return in time for us to have a little holiday together in Cornwall before taking up the new Circuit.

Well now, my darling, I must come to close. I hope you won't feel weary before you reach the end.

Warmest love to you from your fond old Hubby,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Headquarters
XXIst Corps
Heavy Artillery
E.E.F.
14/1/18

My Dear Girl,

I was pleased to hear from you again yesterday. Your letter was written on Dec. 11th, so the letters are coming through a little better now; very likely we shall have things normal soon, which will be much better. I am very glad that you have received the photographs safely. I am also pleased that you both like them. I wonder what kind of frame you will get for them? I did not ride the camel. They were there, waiting for the occasion. It was very awkward indeed mounting the camel, but I think it is really worse dismounting. One has to hold on most grimly, or one is likely to go head over heels!! However, we all did our part of the business — decently. Don't be unnecessarily alarmed about my baldness. I think that photograph of the group is an exaggeration. You will certainly find that I have more hair than is apparent in the photograph. I would really like to have some Harlene⁶³ but we cannot get it here. I am pleased it is having such a good result with you. I really don't mind losing mine but, darling, you must save yourself at any price!! I hope you are taking a tonic now and again.

Well dearest, how is Kathleen? I am very sorry indeed to hear that she is having such a bad cold. I am anxiously waiting now to receive your next letter, which I hope will give me more satisfactory news. The dear pet! I hope she is able to take her part in her Speech Day. You surprise me about Winifred's last Speech Day. It is almost incredible! How the years are rolling by. When will she go to college? I am glad to hear that Kate is improving nicely now. You seem to have thrown off your cold splendidly.

I hope you were able to have a Merry Xmas under the circumstances. I am glad to hear you have sent the missionary money to Mr. Pritchard. It is quite cheering to know that they were "up" on their first round. Yes! The money does vanish! We must really do our utmost now. But then, we are, are we not?

Yesterday and Saturday were very stormy days. Several inches of rain must have fallen. The whole countryside is in flood. The wadis are full with rushing streams. Now, today is a glorious Spring day. We have our worst weather during this month and we are now half-way through it. So, our Winter will soon be past and the time for "the singing of birds" will soon be with us. February, March and April are glorious months. This country would suit you immensely! I had another letter from Flossie Viner yesterday to wish me a Merry Xmas. Mr. Guttery had just then made his visit, which was very successful. The Corn Exchange was crowded as usual. He told the Viners that one of his sons has lost a

⁶³ Brand of hair tonic

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

foot, and it may even be worse than that. How terrible it all seems! Horne has written me again, this time from hospital in Alexandria. His trouble is with the ear and not the throat. The membrane is badly swollen and the drum is perforated. I expect it is with the heavy bombardment! I am fortunately far enough back to be free from the heavy firing. While I have to make my journeys to these batteries, yet I am in comparative safety. We often have enemy planes over when the "Archies"⁶⁴ become lively. Bu this is all in the daily round and we take very little notice of it.

Yesterday I also received an invitation to the Slough Circuit (Windsor). Of course, I am writing to them this morning, informing them that I am now engaged for 1918. I had a great surprise this morning. The C. of E. padre, Rev. H. C. Thomas, of the 36th Stationary Hospital, sent me a book: "The Historical Geography of the Holy Land" by Dr. G. Adam Smith for a Xmas gift. How very kind of him. It is a 12/6 book and the classical work on the Holy Land. The book will be most helpful to me. The Old Testament cities bear new names and it is most bewildering to know the proper places without some guide. This book really supplies a long-felt need. I must "write" him a really nice letter today.

I held two services yesterday; in the morning I had a parade service with an M.T. company, and in the evening, I spoke at the Y.M.C.A. service held in a large cinema hall. It is a splendid building and is well attended. Each night there is something going on, either a lecture or a cinema show. This is a great blessing to the men.

I have no more news now, having written you so recently. I have really lost count of my letters and have failed to number them. I suppose you are getting them all. I think this must be my 53rd letter, at least.

I hope your next letter will reach me soon, with good news of Kathleen, Kate and of everybody else. I was pleased to have the kisses from my dear pet. I send her heaps of kisses and warmest love to yourself, my darling.

Your fond and affectionate bald-headed (?) boy,
Dick.

⁶⁴ Anti-Aircraft guns

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

JERUSALEM & BETHLEHEM

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER 55
Headquarters,
21st Corps H.A.,
E.E.F.
Jan. 28th, 1918

My Darling,

I am still left to my imaginings to know how you are. I have not heard from you yet. One can easily find a little comfort in others' misfortune, for there are a great number like myself. It's quite possible that some of your letters have been lost at sea. And yet I am hopeful receiving someday a large batch of letters giving me all the news.

The weather broke again yesterday and now it is very stormy. We count ourselves most fortunate to have had a fortnight's glorious weather in "midwinter". Now we have high winds, hail, thunder and lightning; but, again, we count our blessings, for we still have a roof overhead! I had a full day arranged for yesterday. But one parade service was impossible to hold because we had no building to go into. I was very sorry for this, for I expected 400 men. However, I did have a service at 9:30. I took the Bible Class at the Y.M.C.A. in the afternoon and gave a talk at the Y.M.C.A. meeting at night. So, irrespective of meeting, with one disappointment during the day, I managed to use up my time profitably.

I know you will be very much interested to hear of my movements during the past week. It has really been a memorable week for me. On Tuesday, Padre Payne (C. of E.) and myself went to Jerusalem. A motor-car was placed at our disposal and we made very good use of it. After 4 hours' run — more than half the way through very rough country to the top of the Judean mountains — we reached Jerusalem by the Jaffa Gate. It was here where the city wall was broken for the German Emperor to pass through. It was just inside this Gate that we stayed at the Grand New Hotel. We were really in Jerusalem almost before we could realise it. There are so many buildings outside. Before evening set in, I had a walk through the narrow, rough and crowded dirty streets. It was a motley crowd that one saw! From the balcony of the Hotel one could watch with great interest the various kinds of people and their attire. All nationalities seemed to move in and out through the Jaffa Gate. At sunset, we had a walk to the South side of the wall, where we had our first look at Mt. Olives, with the valley of Kidron between. This was to our left, and immediately in front of us was the valley of Hinnom and the road which evidently led to Bethlehem. The whole city seemed to go to sleep by 6 o/c and we were not long before "turning in" to our enticing beds. We wanted to be quite fresh for the morrow.

Wednesday was a very full day. Another padre kindly offered to show us round, for he had been there some weeks and knew the place very well. So, during the morning we really "did" the city, as the Americans would say. We started at St. Stephen's Gate, where the first Christian martyr bore his holy witness. Just across Kidron was the site of

Gethsemane and beyond, Mt. Olives and Mt. Mariah. We then proceeded to the Pool of Bethesda, and along the El Doloroso — Way of Sorrow — where our Lord carried the Cross — passing the Ecce Homo Arch, saw some Roman pavement, which belonged to the Judgment Hall where our Lord was condemned by Pontius Pilate. We then went to the Temple Area, passing through Solomon's Porch. On the South side of the Temple Area is the Mosque of Omar, which is a gorgeous building. The building itself is placed "Out of Bounds". To the East was the Golden Gate, or The Gate Beautiful. This is closed, being built up a long time ago. The Sultan at that time had an idea that if any Sovereign entered by this Gateway, the Turkish Empire would fall. We passed from the Temple Area to the Jews' Wailing Place. There were some Jews who were then busy with their wailing. They refuse to go into the Temple Area until the Jewish Temple is restored, and their wailing is for the Restoration of the Temple. It was really a pitiable sight. We then passed on to the Upper Room where our Saviour held the Last Supper. Adjoining this room was David's tomb. We also came to a place which was part of the House of Annas. The house of Calaphas was within the walls, surrounded by an Armenian church, which I didn't enter. There were the different Stations of the Cross, one was a little temple or chapel to Simon of Cyrene. The whole morning was wonderfully interesting. The Holy Sepulchre was also Out of Bounds. Then we returned to the Jaffa Gate where the motor-car was waiting for us. We then proceeded to Mt. of Olives.

I had Luncheon in the German hospice, which is a very grand place. This is a Marble Hall, if there ever was one! After luncheon there we visited the Church (German), which is also a very fine building. I shall have a great deal to tell you about this when I return. From this spot one could see a very long way. It is the finest sight I have ever had without a doubt. The Jordan valley, River Jordan, Dead Sea could be easily seen. The hills of Moab and Mt. Pisgah in the far distance were quite visible. Bethlehem and the hills of Hebron in another direction were quite clear. One also received a bird's-eye view of the city and its walls. The whole country was beautifully laid out before one. More than this, I cannot now describe at present. We returned to our hotel and remained there for the rest of the day.

The following day we made a dash for Bethlehem, which was really the best of all. On our way we passed Rachel's tomb. Bethlehem is quite a nice place, very clean. The people there are much superior in every way from those of other parts. The women have rather an interesting head-dress. We made for the Church of the Nativity. We went to the Sacred Place in a grotto, where our Lord was born and where he was cradled in a manger. It was the bare rock. This place is under a strict guard. There was the Tomb of the Innocents, also the Tomb of Jerome, his chapel and also his school. The Church of the Nativity is built around this sacred spot; the Greek Orthodox, Armenians, and Roman Catholics have an altar each. But the grotto was a hallowed spot for me, in spite of the altars, shrines, candles etc. Then, of course, we had to purchase a memento or two; and so, in Jerusalem. These you will see when I return. I have got something for each of you, and the rest must remain until I see you face to face. So, please darling, don't urge me to tell you what I have got for you!! After lunch in the hotel, we returned to our billets. The

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

event itself was most enjoyable, for the weather was simply perfect and the journey there and back was without one unpleasant incident. I have taken rather full notes and also a few snapshots. I hope I am not wearying you, darling, with this lengthy scribble.

I have just received another cable from Mr. Iles to say that I have been given a unanimous invitation to their circuit for July. So now we know where our home will be after June, and I am fully convinced that we shall have a happy time in our work. I must now write to Mr. Horton and Mr. Davidson and resign my commission. Very likely, I will remain out a little longer, so as to get back to England about the second week in June.

I have also just received a letter from Mr. Percy Viner, who is very well. Mr. Shepherd also wrote to me a few days ago. He too is well and has had another leave to Cairo, and went further on to see Mr. Percy Jones.

I hope you are all keeping well. I shall be so glad when I hear from you again. I am very well. Your photographs are placed in front of me and you can be assured I have a good look at them — now and again!

Give my love to Kate and the others. Many kisses to my little Dear, and warmest love to you, my darling. Yours most affectionately, Dick.

I am enclosing a cheque for £25. I hope you will receive it alright.
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Headquarters,
21st Corps H.A.,
E.E.F.
4/2/18

My Darling Nance,

I have so much to say to you that I scarcely know how to begin. Yesterday I had quite a batch of letters and papers. Three of the letters were from My Love, one from or two from Winifred, one from Winnie N; one each from Flossie and Doris, one from Riddicks of Bournemouth, one from Mr. Iles, and a Miss Grant asking me to make enquiries respecting her brother, wounded and missing since November 2nd. So, you can quite imagine, my thoughts have been well engaged for the last twenty-four hours.

I am so glad to hear from you, dearest! For the last two weeks in the absence of news from you I have been just a bit of "suspended animation", that is all. Now I feel better and am taking the first opportunity to rush a few thoughts off to you. I am very sorry to hear that Kathleen has had such a bad time of it. I hope the good appetite has remained with her and that she has now made a splendid recovery. And about you? It was very hard luck indeed that you were not able to take Kathleen to her Speech Day! Better management next time, I hope!! You did wisely to get the doctor in at once. I am afraid you have been neglecting yourself in attempting to do too much. I will have to cut your wings for you when I return!! But really, darling, I am very sorry to hear of your being poorly. I must come home to look after you. And I am really coming home sometime in April. I have seen the Principal Chaplain this morning, who is on a visit to this neighbourhood. I am to be relieved from my present post about April 2nd, then wait for a boat. So, I won't be home for Easter but possibly for my birthday. Then, when I come home, I will offer my services to the War Office for 3 months. If there is no vacancy, then the General Committee and Missionary Committee will find me something to do until the Conference. Now, I hope most sincerely that this news will make you feel quite better!! For I am not going to France! To think that in two months from now I will be moving nearer England! Well!! It is simply overwhelming! It seems such a long time ago since I last saw you. So, apart from accidents, I will be with you in April! The month of all months for us to meet again!! You remember Browning's line about April, dearest?⁶⁵

My Darling, you have dropped a bomb upon me in your remarks about us going to Wootton Bassett! Your attitude takes me by surprise. I was fully convinced that going to this Circuit would have pleased you immensely. So, what am I to do? I have now promised to go, for there has never been anything in my life that I have felt so sure of and clear about doing than to accept that invitation. I was in such a position that I could really do no other! Upon that, I am still of the same conviction. I am wondering if you are of the same opinion about it, now that I have accepted the invitation. Of course, dearest, you

⁶⁵ "Oh, to be in England / Now that April's there", Robert Browning, "Home Thoughts, from Abroad".

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may go into any other city in the United Kingdom and not find another school equal to the school in Plymouth for Kathleen. I am most anxious that the utmost should be done for our dear pet; and she will be well looked after in that respect in Wootton Bassett. But, what of her education if her health is not good? What I mean to say is this, dearest, that Wootton Bassett is a very healthy, bracing town, and to me this is very important indeed, both for you and Kathleen. Neither of you have really got over the four years spent in a low-lying and unhealthy spot like Witney. Then, the Circuit is worked sectionally, which makes it much easier to work. The people in the Circuit are very sociable and particularly so in Wootton Bassett. It will only be six miles from Swindon. We shall be surrounded by farmers, where living will be cheaper during these hard times. Then, I know that the Circuit will pay a good salary. I must say, my sweetheart, that I am strongly opposed to going North! It is not a suitable country for you nor for Kathleen. So, what's to be done? How inadequate letters are to express one's deepest convictions, are they not, dearest!! And I shall await with great anxiety for your letter in reply to my decision, which you will have received by now. But such things we can talk about much better and more satisfactorily than write about them. So, bear with me, my dearest, it will all come right in the end. It is now in the hands of one Higher than we are and we must leave it with our Heavenly Father.

Now I seem only to have begun and already 4 pages have been covered. I hope you won't think me very "gassy"! I am just wanting a good old talk with you, all alone!! I think I could interest you and amuse you for at least an evening!! Well now, to begin again. "As you were", as they say in the Army. I am in possession of a motor-car, so we have some style!! I am really taking care of the car and driver for a little while. This afternoon, a friend of mine! (Padre Woodhall, Wesleyan; came out on the same boat together!) and I went to Lud, Lod or Lydda, and saw the tomb of our patron saint, St. George. Indeed, I almost kissed the bones of him, kept in a silver casket. The priest really believed I did. However, that is neither here nor there. I took a snap of the building. Richard Lionheart had the building restored during the Crusades. Later, it fell into the hands of the Mohammedan again, until about 50 years ago, when the building was divided, one part into a mosque and the other part for the Christian Church, Greek Orthodox. Of course, here Peter healed Aeneas and then journeyed on to Jaffa. We made a stop at Ramla, where we saw the grave of the Hon. Captain Neil Primrose P.C.⁶⁶ M.P.⁶⁷ The grave is along with many others who fell, at the same time and place, in the grounds of a Greek Orthodox church. Then we visited extensive ruins of what is called Saladin's Tower, leader of the Saracens — Crusading days. The tower is in a wonderful state of preservation. There are many underground buildings, for the whole used to be a monastery, and the monks lived underground. Now the little foxes are making a terrible din outside my window!! To resume — we returned to my bungalow ten miles away and enjoyed The Cup That Cheers!⁶⁸ Since sending Mr. Woodhall on to his "digs" with the car, ahem!, I have been writing this note to you and now dinner is just about ready.

⁶⁶ Privy Council

⁶⁷ Member of Parliament

⁶⁸ The full expression is "The cup that cheers but not inebriates" = a cup of tea.

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Horne is back from hospital, I understand. He was kind enough to send me a dozen films for my Kodak from Alexandria, so now I bless his name and am wonderfully busy taking snapshots of anything of importance.

Yesterday I had a good day, although I was not so busy as I anticipated. (I have just had dinner at 7 o/c pm, and perhaps my pen will run rather heavily now. If it does, kindly excuse, for it is also drawing near to my bedtime.) What was I trying to say before I went to dinner? Oh yes — I remember. Yesterday was not so busy as I had anticipated. One company became suddenly busy, so the service was abandoned. But I had two services. The evening service (voluntary) was excellent. Several men came to me at the close of the service and told me how much it had helped them. It helped me too. I have promised to give them a lecture on Friday night on Jaffa and its surroundings, historical and otherwise. The week following, I intend giving them a lecture on Jerusalem. For now, I must get as much as possible into the next two months. Fancy, only two months until I Pack Up My Old Kit-Bag and Smile! Smile!! Smile!!!⁶⁹

What is more, my darling, I am making my second visit to Jerusalem tomorrow. Now, how jolly if you could have come. We have a very good motor-car and an excellent driver!! Padre Woodhall and a C. of E. padre are to keep me company. We are taking our own bread etc., so as to be sure of something to eat. But I am afraid that the journey there would be too rough riding for you. The road is simply awful. It will certainly be very much better when the British road-menders have finished with it. Yet the grand view in the passes and on the mountains is worth bearing with all the rough and tumble of the road. There are one or two things I failed to see when there before. I must see them this time. More of this when I have returned.

Last Wednesday night I spoke to Mr. Woodhall's men at the Bible Class. I had tea and dinner at his mess. It made a nice break in the week.

Now, what a horrid man I am! I am sure you feel so about me because I have almost said nothing else but about myself. Forgive me this indulgence, darling. I don't often do, Do I? Say No! That's a pet!

Really, seriously, for I have just got my pen recharged, I am enjoying the books sent to me for Xmas. The stories by Ridgwell Cullum are very good indeed. "The Morning Watch" is also good and "The Meaning of Prayer" is simply excellent. Do you want me to make a suggestion for a birthday gift for April 18th? "The Manhood of James" or "Christ" by the same writer would please me immensely. Is it rude to suggest what others should get or give you for a present? I am afraid you will have to teach me my manners again when I return! Ramifications, through Dr. G. A. Smith's book on "The Historical Geography of the Holy Land", affords me great delight. The book is so much more

⁶⁹ World War 1 marching song

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interesting when one is actually in the Land. Then I have read a little book called "The Cross of Job" by Wheeler Robinson. It is a charming thing on the Book of Job. So, you see, my darling, I am not rusting away altogether. Yesterday, or the day before, I commenced "The Coil of Carne" by John Oxenham. But "The Meaning of Prayer" by Dr. Fosdick is a choice book for me.

How delighted I am to receive the report of Kathleen's first term at school. It is very good indeed. Her Daddy feels quite proud of her. I expect her mother does too! The report of the Speech Days of Kathleen's and Winifred's schools is very interesting. I am so very glad that you had such a jolly time for Xmas and the New Year. I had a very quiet time and, in some ways, a miserable time, but I was hoping that you were all making merriment among yourselves. So, it was. I am glad to know it. I hope to make the acquaintance of your visitors of the Army and Navy when I land upon England's shores!

I am very sorry to hear of Stella's husband. I do hope he will be able to have use in his arm. It is really amazing what the R.A.M.C. can do for one nowadays. Horne is returning to his work perfectly cured. His hearing is quite good.

It was quite a nice letter from Mr. and Mrs. Riddick. There was a Xmas card, with a vacant chair and cat gazing at the fire. They are waiting for me to visit them. They are both well. Flossie wrote quite a nice letter and she continues to improve. Doris is quite exuberant, bubbling over, as usual. She is now a typist at the aerodrome on the Burford Road, also Miss Crowther. She has put up her hair!!

Now, really, I must put the brakes on and stop, or else you will be wearied to the point of calling in the doctor! What I have failed to reply to in this scribble I will not fail to do so in my next.

Winifred's and Clifford's letters will be answered at my first opportunity. I am sorry that postcards are so expensive, else I would have sent some.

Before I finally "shut up", let me say that I shall be glad if you will let me know if there is anything you would like me specially to bring from Palestine or Egypt. I will try to execute your order for a slight commission. So, hasten with your order, please, madame!!

You know I love you, darling. And so I do, without a doubt!! So, keep smiling and let me find you looking quite bonny. Love to you all. Many kisses for my dear pet and fondest affection for you from

Your fond Hubby,
Dick.

P.S. Have you received my cheque? So, my pen gives out at last, rather reluctantly. It does seem to complain because of this lengthy scribble, so late in the day!! Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

H.Q.,
21st Corps H.A.,
E.E.F.
9/2/18

My Darling,

I won't be able to write you a very long letter today. Tomorrow is Sunday and that means a fair amount of time will have to be spent in preparation. Then, I have not had another letter from you since I wrote my last one to you, and so have nothing to reply to.

We are now having a period of rainy weather. Today is the fifth day in succession and the whole country is flooded. When it rains here, it does it in no half-hearted fashion. I shall be glad when it takes up again. Still, I count my blessings because I have a house to live in. It is very bad indeed under canvas now. We may soon have to go under canvas again.

My last letter intimated, I believe, that I was going to Jerusalem again. This I did on Tuesday. The journey was not at all pleasant because of rain and slippery roads. However, we got there safely without any accident. My companions were Rev. Woodhall (Wesleyan) and Hayton (C. of E.). In spite of the rain and cold we had a very good time indeed. I visited several places which I was not able to do on my previous visit. I saw the tomb of St. Stephen, outside the St. Stephen's Gate, also the Kidron brook and the valley of Jehoshaphat. We also entered the garden of Gethsemane which is walled around. There's a little chapel inside. The garden has very neatly kept flower beds, a few cypress trees and eight olive trees, which are supposed to be either the same, or offshoots of, the trees there in our Saviour's time. They certainly look very old! There was also, just outside, the Virgin's tomb and also the chapel of the Virgin, which is supposed to be the oldest Christian church. We then returned to the Pool of Bethesda and then to the church of the Sepulchre. This was very interesting indeed. Although it was Out of Bounds, we managed to get inside. The church is divided into five parts — Greek, Armenian, Abyssinian, Copt and Roman Catholic. The R.C.s predominate. In this church you find what is supposed to be the centre of the world, Adam's skull, Calvary, the Sepulchre of our Lord, the Stone of Unction, which is supposed to mark the spot, or to be the stone on which the body of our Lord was laid for the anointing. There are numberless chapels and shrines in every part of the large building. Some of the stories that are told one by the guide about different things in here seemed very far-fetched. They actually show one the Rock that was rent in twain, and also the place where the Cross was fixed.

We also visited the Temple Area once more, and this time I was able to get only a peep into the mosques of Omar and Al Aqsa. The latter is reputed to be part of the Temple of Solomon, and the beams of the roof are "antique", as they call it: the same cedars brought down from Lebanon by Solomon. The mosque of Omar is the finest of the two, and in here is the Sacred Rock, where Mohammed is supposed to have placed his foot for the

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last time, before taking his flight to Heaven on a black horse. His footprint may still be seen, so they say.

On Wednesday, we went to Bethlehem and also to Mt. Olives. I found Winnie Newstead's cousin on Mt. Olives. He is a very nice young fellow. He was pleased to see me, I could see.

On Thursday morning we visited parts of the city again. We went to the Pavement (St. John 19:13). The Arch (Ecce Homo) is in a good state of preservation. There was also the balcony from which Pilate gave his last appeal to the mob. It was a thrilling moment when inside the building, and the Lady Superior explained it to us. A convent covers the whole of the spot now. We also visited a German church on Mt. Zion and a monastery (Benedictines). In this monastery there is a splendid museum — some old ware, dating back to the time of Abraham and Moses and also to the Stone Age. The journey back was also wet and very cold; I have not felt so cold since I left England. Indeed, yesterday I was not too well, having caught a chill, I believe. Today I am feeling almost quite right again.

I hope you are interested in this account, my love. I wish you could have been with me. I am sorry that you are out of all these good things. I do hope you will be able to visit this land someday.

I am anxiously waiting to hear from you again, because I am wanting to know how you are, and also my little pet.

I hope my cheque has reached you safely. I shall be glad when I am back with you again, and relieve you from a great deal of worry. I hope the news in my last letter will cheer you up. It certainly fills me with cheer to think that I shall be with you again in little over two months.

Love to Kate and all the others. Many kisses to Kathleen and fondest love to you, my darling.

Yours with fond affection,
Dick.

JAFFA

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

H'dq'trs,
21st Corps H.A.,
E.E.F.
12/2/18

My Dear Sweetheart,

I am writing to you, not because I have any special news to send, but because I want to have a talk with you. It is impossible to have any fresh news, seeing that I only wrote to Kathleen yesterday and Winifred on Sunday. Then, I have not had any more letters from you since last Sunday week — in fact, no letters from anyone. Isn't it trying, dearie?

Well, how are you now, my dear? I do hope you are much better and feeling quite yourself again. I don't like hearing that you are unwell one bit. I suppose the weather is against you getting out much to take your walks on the Hoe⁷⁰. The thing is: you must keep well shod and wear a nice warm coat. I took notice that you said in one of your last letters that it was impossible to save anything at present. Have you managed to save anything or much since last April? It will be very interesting to be able to go through our accounts together and compare "notes". I will do the comparison and you will keep the notes! Everything must be a very high price with you now. So, they are with us — I mean, extras that one has to buy. We do very well now for rations. We are having rabbits issued again. They are very good. There is also cheese, bacon most days, and if we haven't bread, we have biscuits. Vegetables are very scarce. Almost all our rations and canteen stores are coming from Australia, I believe. We can get all kinds of tinned stores at the canteen, and that helps matters. Occasionally, we also get an issue of very good butter. So, we are not starving, for very often we have local eggs, which are four, sometimes five, a shilling!! One day last week, a little native boy brought 2 eggs and asked a shilling for them. I made him understand that that was too much and told him I could give him a shilling for four. He brought the four in a very short time. Today, the same boy brought 3 and asked a shilling for them. I refused. He went away to bring another. He has not come back yet. He will possibly return tomorrow with two fours for 2/- And so we have to barter for everything. Every native is the same, from the youngest to the eldest. This is no country for you, dearest, for I am sure they would take all your money. I know how frightfully difficult it is for you to barter. I am kept well in practice. My only fear is that I will be doing it at home unconsciously.

I have taken quite a lot of snapshots lately, but I cannot get any paper to print them. I am sure you will like to see them. Today I have been "snapping" donkeys with their heavy burdens, sometimes with their riders, dangling their long legs, which almost touch the ground. The donkey is a most useful and badly treated animal out here. But it is a rare thing to see a woman riding. The man does that, and the woman walks by his side, usually with a very heavy burden on her head. This is quite characteristic of the East. I

⁷⁰ Public space overlooking the Plymouth seashore

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often feel like protesting, but what would be the use of it? They would think me mad, no doubt, and that would scare them.

I had 3 very good services on Sunday. A new unit was an anti-aircraft section. They appreciated the service. Strange to say, a young man came to me after the service and asked if I had ever lived in Witney. He was from Hailey. His name is Nutting. I don't remember his face. He served his apprenticeship at Viner's and he has a sister there now. We had a nice little talk together about Witney.

I am terribly handicapped about a horse. The authorities have not sent me one yet, which is most annoying. I cannot possibly get out to see the men without, because most of them are right off the main road and the wadis at this time of the year are more or less under water, and only a horse can get one there. I am having no end of waiting about it. However, I may get it in time for my successor. That will be all the better for him. Indeed, my appointment to Corps troops is quite a new appointment and the Principal Chaplain said last Monday week that he would be highly satisfied if I got things into working order for the man who will follow me. He sympathised with me and said that if I had been only a young man, he would never have sent me to this work!! So many yards of Red Tape have to be faced and overcome. I know what Red Tape means now!

Any letters written after March 3rd should be addressed:

Rev. R. Cowie C.F.
No. 2 Mess
Mustapha
Alexandria
E.E.F.

"To be called for."

This is where I will wait for my boat. I may possibly have to wait only a day, or it might be a fortnight. One can never tell. I will leave here for my journey down to the base, either on April 1st or April 8th. So, it would perhaps be wise not to send me any more letters after March 14th. That doesn't seem very long now, does it dearest? What will you do when you have no letter to write on Sundays? Please, darling, don't worry yourself about me on my journey home. I am expecting a short sea route. So, cheer up!! I will try to get a cable off to you before I sail and will also wire as soon as I reach England. If I could depend on you being physically fit, I would ask you to meet me in London. There are several matters that will have to be settled in London shortly after I arrive. We can possibly have a few days in the City, Eh? after I have shown my face in Plymouth. Oh, that will be joyful!! Of course, the same thing will apply about the papers. What a fine old talk we will have together, all on our own, eh? Oh! I am simply pining for a bit of real home life again, and how pleased I shall be to have it. However, it won't be so much longer now. Our life in the future will be all the sweeter because of this forced separation. It has proved to me again and again how necessary you are to my life. I hope that I am as necessary for your happiness, darling. You are always first in my affection and the chief

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object of all my work. To remember you is, without fail, an inspiration in my daily duties. I shall value your counsel and presence more than ever in days to come. But it is useless, dearest, for me to try to tell you how much you are to me!! I am looking forward to a life of much greater usefulness in the homeland, side by side with you.

Have you had Dr. Simpson to see you again, darling? Was it February or March that he had to see you again?

Now I must bring my chat to a close. It is near bedtime, 8:30pm, and I must read just a little before I "turn in". Love to all in the house. Very many kisses to my Girlie and fondest love to my Darling from

Your loving hubby
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

H' dq' trs,
21st Corps H.A.,
E.E.F.
16/2/18

My Darling,

I am writing you today, which is Saturday, because I don't expect to have time to do so on Monday, which is my usual time. So, it may be a hasty scribble and rather brief. If it happens to be so, kindly remember tomorrow is Sunday. Since last writing to you, nothing has happened which I am permitted to write about in a letter. I have certainly been very busy visiting different companies or units, arranging for tomorrow's services. In fact, there is so much to be done tomorrow that I have had to get another United Board chaplain to assist me by taking a service. If I could arrange for a service at every centre where troops come under my care, then I should really need quite half-a-dozen beside myself to do the work. The area I have to cover, and the amount of work that ought to be done on a Sunday (and the men are simply yearning for a service) is colossal. However, I know now that my work at present is continuous "donkey" work, organising the whole of the corps troops in the interests of the U.B. I am not complaining in the least; in fact, I am enjoying it, especially when I am able to have a service, sometimes in the open field under a hot sun, or in the yard just at late evening, or in a wooden building where the men live and sleep etc. Then, at the end of it, for the men to ask when I am coming again. It is all very interesting and also encouraging — to see the men thirsting for the truth, longing to sing the old hymns and most plainly enjoying the means of grace. My open-air speaking in Witney Circuit has proved a fine training for me. The whole work, in fact, is an unspeakable joy. And while there is no rousing revival of religion among officers and men, yet I am absolutely certain that their interest and sympathy for religious worship and Bible reading is increasing in a remarkable way. They enjoy a service without any ceremony. And it is here where the Church of England padres are learning a great lesson, which perhaps only The War could teach them.

I had one of the finest services of my life, especially as chaplain, last Wednesday. It was an impromptu meeting. The men, about 30 of them, had just finished their day's work. They are motor-car drivers. I went in among them, as they were having their meal, and asked them if they would like a sing-song. They were quite willing. There was an old harmonium in the building. I asked if anyone could play. There was no one. So, I sat down and asked them what hymn they would like and so we started. After three hymns, I led them in prayer, then a few more hymns, then I had a plain talk with them and I never had a more attentive congregation. We had two more hymns, then closed. They wished me to go back again soon. It was a most helpful service for myself.

Yesterday, arranging a service for tomorrow with an anti-aircraft section, they asked (the officers on behalf of the men, as well as for themselves) if I would give them a talk on my visit to Jerusalem. I think I told you in my last letter that I held a service there last Sunday

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

and had a most happy time with them. Well, I promised to give them a talk on Jerusalem. But to have officers and men taking such a lively interest in the Bible and these sacred places, to me at least, is a great inspiration. My experiences now, I most sincerely hope, will make me a more worthy servant in the service of our Lord and Master. I cannot help but feel that my work in His great Kingdom is just beginning, and that out here I am really finishing the years of preparation. And most sincerely and humbly do I say it, Darling, that my decision to come home in April, and also to accept the call from the Brinkworth Circuit, is through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. My conviction in this matter is stronger than ever. If God does not wish us to go there, then I have no doubt that another door, and a more effectual, will open for us. You are my partner in this work. Your presence and finer counsels give me the motive power to carry out what is "The perfect will of God". And I am anticipating a greater joy in making clear the Gospel truth. I am thinking and feeling many things concerning our sacred work that I can express. But, God Himself fully understands, and you my darling, and our little girlie are in his keeping. We all are, in fact, and none can pluck us out of his hands.

I intend going to the 36th Stationary Hospital on Monday, to arrange my kit, which was left there, so as to be able to pick it up easily when I begin my journey home. I am also seeing the dentist. The hard biscuits have played havoc with my teeth. Really, I am looking forward to seeing many of the old faces again.

I had a letter and also a photograph from the Sister who posted those two parcels to you in November. She was married shortly after arriving in England. Her fiancé was on leave from France, waiting for her. They had 5 weeks together and spent their honeymoon at Clivedon. Her home is in Bristol and she came all the way by boat from Egypt and landed at Bristol. She was very fortunate. I wish I could be landed at Plymouth! One never knows, really.

Excuse more, dearest. I am still anxiously waiting to hear from you again. The mails are most bewildering at present. I received a "Leader" only two days ago and nothing else has arrived since. The "Leader" is dated Jan. 16th. I suppose something will turn up soon.

Hope you are feeling quite strong again and that Kathleen is putting on flesh, as well as retaining her good spirits.

I am wonderfully well, in fact I am in perfect health, I am thankful to say. Love to all. Kisses, of the very best kind for Kathleen, and fondest and warmest love to my sweetheart.

Yours,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER 60

36th Stationary Hosp.

E.E.F.

22/2/18

My Darling,

I was hoping to write a few lines before this. I have been kept busy, just before I left Jaffa and after arriving here. It was quite a pleasure to see the old place again, where I spent so many happy months, and to renew my friendship with many of them here. They gave me quite a warm reception, and the days have been flying past. The dentist has not been able to do the necessary work for me in the time and so I am having to remain here until he has finished with me. He is making an entirely new plate for me; then my present plate will become my temporary set. I expect to leave again tomorrow morning for Jaffa. I am taking all my kit to the base, where I will be able to pick it up easily when I come down the Line for good and make tracks for home. It will only be a few more weeks now!! It is quite cheering to anticipate such a thing happening so very soon. I am still without a letter from you. Maybe there will be some waiting for me when I return. I sincerely hope so, for I am anxiously waiting to hear from you. I see that there have been mails lost at sea both ways, so I am very much afraid that we have both lost letters.

I gave a lecture last night at the repeated requests of a great many on "A Visit to Jerusalem". They are all pining to see Palestine and particularly Jerusalem. There was quite a crowd present, and about 30 out of 40 Sisters were in the crowd. I really spoke for a solid hour, not a minute less nor a minute more! Isn't it awful? But I really didn't mean to do such a thing! I thought that 30 minutes was all that I had spoken. But the crowd did it, I believe, for they were so content and appreciative. I am getting ready for the time when I get home, you see!! Still, I think the lecture would have been more interesting still if I could have shown them views of the places of interest. That may happen when I get home.

The batman I had when posted here is still with this unit. He wished that he had been able to have remained with me. He has never been so happy as when looking after me. So, I cannot be so bad after all!!

The Hospital is looking quite desolate now. They are pulling it down and they soon expect to go further North. There are also very few patients, and many of the old personnel have been transferred to the infantry, which I think is very hard indeed. Some of these men, I know, are non-combatants, on principle and by conviction, and have been in the R.A.M.C. for more than 3 years. Some have seen service in France, where they were wounded. They don't object going to the Front as R.A.M.C. men, but they do object to combatant service.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

This, to my mind, is simply bottling up trouble for coming days. This is being “a penny wise and a pound foolish”.

I am remarkably well. I am disappointed in not being able to have a bathe while here. The sea is very rough and also dirty and the air is decidedly chilly. So, I am denied the pleasure of a swim.

I have just met a young man whom I once saw in Oxford. I know his fiancée very well — a sister of one of our ministers — Rev. W. Clifford M.A.⁷¹ This same young man only received his commission a few weeks ago. There is also another patient in hospital here who wishes to see me. I am told he knows me. I am going to visit him tonight. How small the world seems to be sometimes!

I hope you and Kathleen are very well now and that everything is going well with you. How glad I shall be to be back to just worry you, so to speak!!

Love to all. Kisses to Kathleen and fondest love to my darling.

Yours most affectionately,
Dick.

⁷¹ Master of Arts

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER 61

H.Q.,
21st Corps H.A.,
E.E.F.
25th Feb. 1918

My Dearest,

At last I have received two letters from you, after nearly being a month without. Many thanks for both letters. They were waiting for me when I returned from Mahemdia. The morning I arrived at Mahemdia, I asked if there were any letters for me, and I was told that two letters had just been sent off for me. Wasn't it provoking. One of the letters I find was from you. Now I find that I have news from you up to January 23rd. I think there must still be a letter missing between Jan. 6th and Jan. 15th. But maybe you did not write to me between these dates.

I am afraid that several letters of mine have been lost. I have written most regularly and in some cases I thought the scribbles would be interesting to you. It does seem very strange that you should not hear that I had moved up the Line until the 22nd Jan. I came forward on Dec. 1st. The change was most welcome, I can assure you, and I have been much happier. How sorry I would have been had I returned home without seeing Palestine and also with some experience of real active service. What a lot of things I will have to tell you when we meet, which I cannot possibly put into letters. And I hope that not only my talks to the children will be interesting, but also my talks to the "grown-ups". Being here, seeing the life of the country, the people who are now living and carrying on in much the same way as the people did 2,000 years ago. It all throws light on the Old and New Testament stories and teaching. I count myself most fortunate indeed to be on this battle front. And if Dame Fortune smiles upon us in the years to come, I intend bringing you out here to see the country for yourself. I often feel so lonely as well as selfish in my admiration of this Sacred Land. I am certainly enjoying my present good fortune to the utmost and don't complain in the least. Oh! if I could have you here too!!

I am very much interested in your new purchase of dress material and also in what you are making for Kathleen. What a pity boots are so dear, yet you must get some. It would be handy if you had someone like the Viners near who would allow discount. I know you will keep our little girlie well shod. I am in a splendid condition of "repair". I will probably get another pair of boots before I leave for England. We get things at a special rate from the Ordnance. I wish I knew Wilson's size of boots. Of course, we keep no Ladies' boots!! The boots we can get are not too heavy and they are waterproof. It is really amazing what things one collects together, and how I am to get them home will be my trouble soon. But I will manage to surmount the trouble, no doubt.

There are heaps of things I would like to buy to bring home with me as souvenirs, but transport always confronts me. Still, I have a few as it is.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Are you having the material made up for the Spring, which I sent you from Cairo dearest? I hope you are; then I will see it, or see you, which is more important, in your glory!! I hope the cheque for £25 which I sent has reached you safely. But don't spend it rashly!! I wish the amount had been £250!! I am glad that, in spite of the food crisis at home, you are still able to get enough. We are doing splendidly now. The rations are excellent. I will have to come down a peg or two when I leave here and get home, without a doubt.

My few days at the 36th Stationary Hospital were very pleasant. The weather was very dull and also cold. I received a warm welcome from all the old friends. The dentist has fixed me up wonderfully well and I have never felt more comfortable at my meals. All my friends at Mahemdia thought that I was looking very well. I just tell you this so as to assure you that I look as well as I feel. I wish you and Kathleen were as fit as I am.

I wonder what you have to say now that I have accepted the invitation to Wootton Bassett? I suppose Plymouth is out of the question now. I would like to succeed Wilson very much, and if the Missionary Committee wish me to go there, or anywhere else, I would go. So, for the present, I must leave things as they have been arranged. And I am very much afraid that my acceptance of Wootton Bassett is not very pleasing to you; and this thought causes me to be greatly distressed.

I have had another letter from Mr. Iles; they are very pleased that I accepted. There was not one, either neutral or in opposition, to the invitation. The present salary is £140 per year or £35 per quarter. The 2nd minister, Rev. T. Bates is paid £32/10/0 per Quarter. By next July there will be no debts in the Circuit. They are trying to purchase a new house in Wootton Bassett; if they cannot succeed to do this, they will make considerable alterations to the present house. Personally, I would rather they secured another house, and I am certain that they will raise my salary at least £10 a year when I get on the Circuit.

I am preparing two or three lectures, ready for the time when I reach home. I think it is possible to give a decent talk for an hour on my visit to Jerusalem; another hour's talk on Palestine, another on Egypt and another on my experiences during my year out here. How would that programme do, dearest? As to their titles, well: I am sure you would be willing to help me to give them a name. The lecture at Mahemdia gave the utmost satisfaction. I found out afterwards that not only did we have a large number of C. of E. Sisters, but two Roman Catholic Sisters were also present, to the astonishment of everyone, and they were very pleased with the "performance". Ahem! Now it is really too awful to talk about myself like this, isn't it? I am afraid you are thinking that I am suffering with "swelled head". However, there is no one to tell you what I do and how my attempts to do good succeed, if I don't do it. So, I venture to tell you, even at the risk of being though egotistic!!

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

What a delight to have such a nice little letter from my own dear Kathleen. She is clever. And what a surprise to know that she has grown 1½ inches since August. She is evidently going to be tall. The friends who have seen both of your photographs think Kathleen very much like her mother! Is that not sad to think that my image or likeness is fast fading away! But she is a girl, and she ought to be like her mother. I most sincerely hope she is like you, dearest, for I don't want to be looking upon myself. I would much rather see you reproduced in our "Treasure". I am glad to hear that she is doing so well at school and so now she is in the upper kindergarten. The report for her last term reached me safely and I thought it exceedingly good. I hope the next report will be equally good.

How sorry I am to hear of Mrs. Jones' health. Mr. Jones ought to have leave home now: he has been out here quite a long time and leave is overdue to him. One thing is sure, Witney is not a suitable place for Mrs. Jones, and such as her.

I hope the Missionary Anniversary was successful with an increased revenue. Winifred has done very well with her box again. I am also very pleased to hear that your C. E. class is so successful.

So sorry to hear of Clifford Garland's sudden death. I remember him quite well. I often wonder how they are progressing in the Guernsey Circuit now, with Mr. Mayland there. Do you have any news at all?

Today has been a perfect day. I am now getting into thinner clothing during the day, for some days it is quite warm. The rains are about over now. I suppose we shall only have "the latter rains", which are always so acceptable in the midst of the heat!

I think I have written enough for this time. The Rev. E. B. Rowcliffe, Senior Chaplain, came up The Line last week. He had tea with me yesterday. Horne is back to his duty. Two of the United Board chaplains have won the M.C.⁷², both with front-line brigades — Revs. Walkey and Rees Morgan. Mr. Rawcliffe has been mentioned in despatch.

I suppose you have heard that Jericho has been taken by us. Very likely, things of more importance even than this will happen soon. We believe in doing things out here! I hope the recent rumours about the Western Front are not correct. I cannot believe they are. Anyhow, it is for us to do what we can to equalise matters somewhat, if it is correct. The morale of the men out here is very high.

Now let me have good news about yourself and Kathleen soon. I am always anxiously waiting for the next letter! And remember that, if any letters are written to me after March 14th, they will not likely reach me in time before I sail for England.

Give my love to Kate and all the others.

⁷² Military Cross (medal)

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

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Many kisses to my dear Kathleen and fondest and warmest love to you, my darling.

Yours ever,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER 62
H'Quarters
21st Corps H.A.,
E.E.F.
March 1st

My Dearest,

I am going to scribble a few lines to you now. I have just a short time to spare before starting out for the whole morning to arrange services for Sunday. So, if my note extends over several days, don't be surprised. I know you would rather have a letter in piecemeal form than nothing at all.

I have been very busy since I returned from Mahemdia. I arrived here on Sunday noon, as you know, and was kept fairly active for the rest of that day. Then, on Monday, I made arrangements with two units, several miles apart, for a service or meeting on Tuesday and Wednesday nights respectively. Both were arranged and duly held. Padre Rawcliffe (my Senior Chaplain) and Padre McBeth came for tea. We had quite a nice chat together and our work together was fully considered. I find that I am really considered the Senior Chaplain for our Corps. This is quite an unexpected honour, for there are other U.B. Chaplains who are of longer service than I and who are certainly, in my opinion, much more capable. Still as you know, dearest, I always do my best wherever I am stationed; and that's what I am doing now. The turn in events this week at H.Q., where I go frequently, has been most agreeable. They seem now to be trying to help me in carrying out my duties, which before I could not always believe. I have had the use of a horse this week, twice so far — Wednesday and yesterday. But if you could have seen me on Wednesday, riding on a heavy draught horse, I am sure you would have been highly amused. It almost shook the life out of me. It has certainly made me feel very sore, especially on the shoulders. Its trot was ponderous and its canter was not very comfortable. However, it did me good service, for it took me quite 16 miles. But yesterday I had a real gem of a charger, belonging to one of the Staff Captains. It was a pleasure to ride. It was a wee bit frisky when I first mounted — and danced round, up and down — then we got away. A groom was also sent with me so, yesterday, I was able to do things in proper form!! I have just been out watching the anti-aircraft guns at work. It gives interest to watch our gunners at work. On Tuesday night, I gave a talk to an anti-aircraft battery on Jaffa and district. On Wednesday, I gave a talk to Corps H.Q. motor drivers on my visit to Jerusalem. Both meetings were quite informal. I was very much surprised on Wednesday, when our meeting was over and I was gathering my hymn books together, a shy hesitating Corporal said he would like to thank me on behalf of the men, etc. They were anxious that I should make it a weekly meeting. To have such a request was the very thing I needed and so, now, I have made it a fixture. How they like to sing and how attentive they listen to one's plain talk!! Yesterday morning was fully occupied in arranging with units for services on Sunday. I am having four units for one parade. I am going out again this morning and will do the same thing tomorrow, to arrange for

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Sunday. Padre Woodhall came and had tea with me yesterday. We both went to a concert in the Y.M.C.A. hall. It was very good indeed. The hall was packed in every hole and corner and hundreds were turned away. After the concert, I went to Woodhall's Mess and had dinner with, at 9 o/c pm. The concert party are called the "Jaffa Jinks". They have very good talent in the party.

Now it is afternoon. I returned just in time for lunch, feeling rather tired, having walked the whole of the morning. I called to see a Major this morning, who was at Mahemdia for some time when I was there. He was very friendly, and I am invited to dine with him next Friday and he is sending his car for me. Ahem! He has also placed a horse at my disposal any time, and a car whenever I shall need one. I was hoping to arrange a service for his men, but they are too busy at present — but we shall be able to have one on Sunday week. It makes one's life tolerable out here to have such real kindness shown. The Major is by no means what is ordinarily called a religious man, but he certainly has in large measure a Christian spirit all the same. And there are many such out here. This is an aspect of human character that one is pleased to find under somewhat rough exteriors. So, on the other hand, one finds meanness among one's own brethren, which is very painful. So, things and men are not sometimes what they seem!

The weather has been unsettled for the last two weeks and now we are expecting more settled weather. March is a delightful month, I understand. The orange groves are looking rather bare now, but already the blossom is appearing and the almond groves are in full bloom. The undergrowth of the groves is very refreshing — nice green grass and various kinds of flowers. The fields too are very pleasing, after so many months of the bare sandy desert. The corn fields are already several inches in growth, which was only sown a few weeks ago, and the poppies are the same there as at home, and the meadows have many flowers — forget-me-nots, anemones and narcissus etc. They are all very welcome. The palm trees always impress one with their majesty — towering above all the others.

I begin to realise now, as never before, how near the time is for me to leave for home. This is now March. It may be four weeks on Monday or five weeks or perhaps a little longer. It will depend on my relief arriving. But, fancy, by the time you have received this note you will have finished sending your letters out to Egypt for me!! But mine you will receive until almost the day I arrive home! I will keep you as well informed as to my movements as I am able. Sailings of boats, of course, I can never say. As I think I intimated recently in a letter, if I happen to have to pass through London to reach Plymouth, I will remain in London and do my business at the War Office, bankers, and with Mr Horton and others. But I will wire you from there, and expect you to come up to London. A prepaid wire would let me know by which train you will travel, then I could meet you at Paddington etc. etc. So, in case this is done, you must not worry, catch no colds, but take a good tonic and keep yourself fit! Do you understand, darling! I am sure you will be quite ready for a little holiday in London by that time. The uncertainty of the way home is simply blissful. It may be through Italy, or through France only, or by sea all the way. I don't know what to wish for and so leave it for others to decide for me. It would really

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

be very nice to go through Italy and France, or only through France, having made the journey out by sea all the way.

I am waiting to hear from you again. The weekly papers too will be very acceptable, as I haven't had a paper for some time now. And news of The War is very good, but it is always small. This theatre ought to furnish soon further news of British arms and make it impossible for the Turk to carry on any longer. We must wait and see!! I am now anxious to visit Jericho and the Dead Sea, but I don't see how that "stunt" can be carried out in the short time now left to me in this country. It would still be better to go to Shechem, Nazareth, Capernaum and Damascus. These places must be visited the next time!

Now, take care of yourself, dearest. Don't forget to keep yourself well supplied with a good tonic. Then I shall find you "as fit as a fiddle". I am simply "ripping"⁷³. Love to Kate and Winifred, also Wilson and Clifford. Cart-loads of kisses for my dear Kathleen! Warmest and tenderest love to you, my sweetheart.

Yours devotedly,
Dick.

⁷³ In excellent physical shape

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER 63

H.Q.

21st Corps H.A.,

E.E.F.

4th March 1918

My Darling,

I think that my last letter told you everything that was worth telling up to that date, Friday the 1st. inst.⁷⁴ Since then, nothing of any great importance has taken place, except it is the ever-present fact that I am still waiting for your letters. My hopes were raised yesterday. We had heard that a mail was in, but it has turned out that it is really of no good at all to me, at least so far. Of course, there may be something more today and my anxiously waited for letters and papers will arrive! So, we live in hopes. So far, I have not died of despair. I know you are sending them out to me, so whether I receive them or not, you get the credit of writing them.

On Saturday morning, I had to make further enquiries about my watch. It has not yet been returned from the repair shop in Cairo. They have had it since Dec. the 20th. I have really felt so awkward at times, without a watch, that last week I bought another for 10/- . So far, it keeps fairly good time. But this country, for some mysterious reason, plays havoc with watches. I suppose the sand and dust partly account for it, and maybe the heat dries up the oil on the wheels, etc.

I had a very good day yesterday. It is the padre's day of the week. I had four services. The first one was 10 o/c in the open air, in a vineyard. There were quite 200 present. Many natives hovered round. Before the service was over, one felt it rather hot. The sun is beginning to get powerful again. Then, about half a mile away, I had another service at 11 o/c. There were about 40 present. We had our meeting place in some old houses with neither windows nor doors left. Still, it was a shelter from the sun, and this little service was most enjoyable. This place was overlooking the sea, and the sea was most tempting — it looked so clean and calm. In fact, I am going to try to get a bathe in this week. The O.C. of this unit was very warm in his appreciation of my services and hoped I would come again. So, here was another door opened, not so much because of King's regulations, but because of the willingness of officers and men to worship God! I rested during the afternoon, but at 5 o/c — sunset — I held a service in a native yard where officers and men of an anti-aircraft battery gathered for worship. Here it is always an uncertain thing, if one will be able to go right through with the service for, if an enemy plane came over, the men would have to stand to.⁷⁵ So, when we begin, we don't know just how we will finish. Last evening, a fair amount of firing was heard in the distance, and eyes were constantly being turned upwards to look either for the enemy or for shell explosions. So, in spite of distractions, we "kept on carrying on"⁷⁶ and finished in an

⁷⁴ Dated

⁷⁵ To be ready for attack

⁷⁶ Ref. to the title of a popular wartime song

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

orthodox fashion. A mile nearer my billet I had another service at 6:30 in the men's billet. I had several men in the audience who had walked nearly two miles for the service. We had a good time and I returned to my billet feeling rather tired, but happy with the day's duties. Someday I will be able to write an account of the peculiar places where I have held services to talk of our Saviour to men! Yesterday morning, at the second service, I was told how well I pitched the tunes and what a _____ lead I gave to the service etc. etc.!! I just say this so that you won't think that I am altogether a nonentity!

Last week I finished Wheeler Robinson's book "The Cross of Job". It is excellently written and presents the teaching of Job in a very clear way. I am now reading "Exposition of the Pilgrim's Progress" by Rev. Robert Stevenson, in The Guild Text Book series. It is well written. I am hoping when I return to circuit work to be able to do far more serious reading than I have ever been able to do before. I have often felt out here how I have allowed my time to be used up for too much in trivial things on my last circuits. I also look forward with great delight to the prospect of us taking some book and reading it aloud.

I am writing a few letters this morning: one to Father, Sally etc. How glad I shall be to hear you and Kathleen are quite well. If you could only have a period of the weather we are enjoying now, I am sure it would do you good, only if here you would have to be most careful what you ate and drank!

The outlook in Russia seems more than ever complicated. But it looks less favourable for the Germans. If Japan is taking "the necessary and adequate measures", we know what that means: and will mean many German troops being kept busy on their Eastern theatre of war. If Germany would not remain so foolhardy and the whole War came to an end, how thankful we all would be!!

Give my love to Kate and the others. I will want a great many real kisses from Kathleen when I see my pet; Yes, and also a great number from you. Heaps of kisses and love to both of my sweethearts.

From your fond old Hubby,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER 64

Hdqtrs.
21st Corps H.A.,
E.E.F.
March 6th, 1918

My Dearest,

I was pleased to receive a letter from you this morning. It has just been five weeks on the way. It is dated Jan. 30th. But I am very glad to have any letter from you at all, however long they may be in reaching me. It seems a very lonely land sometimes, with no one to talk with, or with any congenial company; and only thoughts of you and anticipation of seeing you soon enables me to keep my pecker up and keep a smile on. And when your letters are not forthcoming, perhaps you can imagine my feelings! I keep myself busy, and so try to help the time to pass quickly. A little systematic reading is also keeping me up to the scratch. I have begun this week a little book on "Studies in the Acts of the Apostles". I read a chapter night and morning. The book on "Pilgrim's Progress" is also helpful in many useful suggestions. But I am not making any new sermons at present! I don't think that this really a good thing for me. But, since leaving Mahemdiah, I have not been able to have any concentration for sermon-making. I am out for the most part of each day, and when I get back, I am usually very tired.

I have been anxiously waiting for your fuller expression of opinion about Wootton Bassett. I have already written a great deal about this in previous letters, and so there is no need for me to write much more. I am exceedingly sorry that it is so much in opposition to your wishes. But, I don't think that we can make things any better by arguing about it. Yet, to know that my decision has so completely run counter to your desires makes me feel a sad man!

I expect Mrs. Iles has sent you by now the information you asked about the house, etc. Who was the young man from Swindon? Was the information he gave you satisfactory? I suppose if I went to a town church, most of my time would be occupied in raising money and clearing off debts; and my time at home would be less than will likely be the case in the Brinkworth Circuit. Still, as you suggest, the Missionary Committee may think me more useful in some other circuit and send us there. After what they did at last Conference concerning the compact made between the Swindon people and myself, they may do a similar thing again. I have pointed out this possibility to the Brinkworth Circuit. We might be stationed at a better circuit; it is possible to be posted at a much worse. But this much, my dearest, I want you to be sure of, that I am always out to secure the best interests of you and Kathleen. In this I hope you trust me!

What a joy to know you and Kathleen are so well. But I hope you are not working too hard and attempting too much. I am afraid you are, you know! Do take care, that's a love! It's certainly very interesting to know your Junior C.E. is doing so well, and it must be

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

very encouraging to you. You are fortunate in securing speakers, I see. How did you succeed with your paper at the Senior C.E.? I hope your song "May Dew" went well at the Missionary "At Home". I remember the song quite well, and like it very much.

My recent letters will have informed you that I will not be home for Easter. I never realised that Easter Sunday was "March 31st", which is early this year. I will likely remain where I am until that date. But, immediately after that, I expect to be moving homewards and so, about the middle, or towards the end of April I will be with you again. How delightful to think of the time getting so near and to have the prospect of seeing you, my darling, once more. What heaps of things we shall have to talk about then!!

I have often wondered about Stella's husband and how he was progressing. When we are in London, we can possibly call to see him and Stella, eh? I suppose you know one of Mr. Hallams's sons of Southampton was severely wounded out here before Xmas. In the Leader he was reported as being at Port Said. I fully intended calling to see him when visiting Mahemdia, but found on enquiring by telephone that he had been removed to another hospital too far away for me to visit him. He has been rewarded with an M.C. for his bravery.

Yesterday I was out on horseback visiting the R.F.C. and the balloon section. Their work is very interesting. I am expecting Padre Woodhall to tea and dinner today. He is speaking at a meeting for me tonight. Rev. John McNeill comes to the town for this weekend. I hope to hear him. I hear that he is doing very well among the troops.

Now I have given you all the news. Tenderest and fondest love and kisses to you and Kathleen.

Your devoted and sometimes provoking Hubby,
Dick.

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LETTER 65

Hdqtrs.
21st Corps H.A.,
E.E.F.
March 7th, 1918

My Darling,

Again, I am writing you a little note. I only wrote to you yesterday when I gave you news up to date. I am not writing you now because I have any special news to send you, but simply and only because I wanted to have a little chat with you. I have been out all the morning and returned for lunch feeling very tired. It is very hot today. I walked this morning from 9:30 to 12:30 in my full winter clothing, and I can assure you I felt anything but comfortable. The heatwave started yesterday in a dust storm. The wind was strong yesterday and it was quite suffocating. Today the wind has subsided, but we have intense heat. So, the hot weather has begun. I must gradually change into my drill suit again, also into my shorts. Then I shall feel more comfortable.

Padre Woodhall came in for dinner last night. Before dinner he spoke to a company of men for me on "Moslem Religion". It was quite good and appreciated by the men. The mosquitos got at me last night, in spite of my netting. They were very lively and now I have a few swellings, indicating their generous bites. One got a bite on the top eyelid, and so for the next day or two I will have more or less a black eye. I shall certainly have a swollen eye. So, I am not quite presentable at present!! The flies too are becoming very lively and we are all out for wholesale slaughter. Our policy is to kill at sight. We spare none. Such a country as this, where such work has to be done, is no place for you.

I have been out this morning arranging for Sunday services for the morning. I have already arranged for two at 10 o/c and 11 o/c.

I believe Kate's birthday is on the 31st of this month. Kindly give her my very best wishes and may she have many happy returns of the day. Kindly include my name in your gift to her for that day. I know you will give her something worthy of us!! I wonder what it will be?

You have not yet said if you want me to make my special purchases in Egypt before I leave it for good. Perhaps one of your letters now on the way to me will tell me. Have you received my cheque yet, darling? It ought to have reached you by now. Here I must stop and will resume it later.

March 8th.

Here is another day and I will try and finish my scribble to you for this week. As I suggested yesterday, and as I anticipated, I am quite disfigured on one side of my face

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

with a swollen eye. I feel most comfortable when I look — down my nose! To look up — well, it's more difficult than ever!! However, I shall be better tomorrow when "the swelling thereof" will have subsided. Today I will try to keep my face indoors. Yet, I was forgetting, I must go out tonight. I am "Dining Out" with a Major Bell. He is sending his car for me about 7 o/c. It doesn't show so much when I wear my glasses. So, I think I will have to wear my glasses tonight. Then I will be a "toff"!!

You have been very much in my thoughts for the last two days and nights, my love. I hope you and Kathleen are quite well, and I trust everything is quite alright with you. Your letters are always too short for me and there is never sufficient on them about you and Kathleen to my liking. How thankful I shall be to be back with you again. Then I shall be able to look after you every day. How terrible it must be for those men, to say nothing about their wives, who have been separated from one another for several years now, and are not likely to see each other again until the end of the war! I am grateful that our position is not like that. I am feeling quite unsettled now and will likely remain so until I am actually on the way to dear old "Blighty". I will soon have to be packing up my goods. It is surprising how one accumulates things. I find that I have more to take home than I brought from it. Of course, I bought most of my camp kit after arriving in Egypt. So, there will be that and a few more things.

How are you managing with money affairs now? Have you been able to save anything since Xmas? I wonder if you will be able to send anything to York from the last amount I sent to you. I was going through my accounts last night and I expect to be able to save a little out of my allowances. I wonder if you can guess how much. You mustn't forget, of course, that I have been to Cairo twice, a week each time, and also to Jerusalem twice and a great deal was spent on presents etc. Of course, you don't know what I bought at Jerusalem, but you shall know when you see me undoing my kit!! I can quite imagine you being impatient with me at keeping my purchases in the dark. I think there is something for each of you! It may not be much, but it is something — a memento from the Holy Land. Well, how much do you think I have saved? Just make a careful guess and see how near to the amount you are. And when I see you, you dear, I will let you know if you have hit the "Bull's Eye"!!

In my letter to Father on Monday, I told him to send on to you the demand note for my insurance. And if I am not home in time for the District Synod, perhaps Wilson will send me the Friendly Society subscription. Of course, I hope to be in time to see to that myself.

Now I must stop my claptrap. Love to all. Shiploads of kisses for my girlie and fondest love to you, my Darling.

Your old sweetheart and Hubby,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

P.S. I have finished last night my reading of "Exposition of Pilgrim's Progress", and have now added to my list "In the Wilderness" by Robert Hichens.

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[On a separate loose sheet]

P.S. I have been seriously thinking, dearest, if it meets with your wishes, to take the necessary steps to have 'Watson' attached to our name. What do you think of such an addition? I feel sure you would like to have the addition and, personally, I would like us to perpetuate your parents' name. Perhaps you can make up your mind by the time of my arrival. What has to be done? I wonder. I know that a fee has to be paid.

Yours,
Dick.

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LETTER 66

H. Q., 21st Corps,

E.E.F.

11th March, 1918

My Darling Nance,

I wish it were possible to have a real talk with you, instead of writing to you. Whilst I have no news to send you, I feel that I must just have a few words with you at the beginning of a new week. This is always my feeling on a Monday morning. I am still waiting to hear from you again. I do hear that a mail has arrived in this country. It may reach us today, or perhaps not until tomorrow. I hope the mail brings me something from you. I never waited for your letters with such keenness as I do at present. And I am wanting to write to you every day. I crave for you all the time and how very glad I shall be to be with you once more. And how I long to see our little pet again. I feel that I am missing so much of her interesting life while I am away. I don't mind now how soon I have to leave this country for home. However, I must not become impatient.

I had a full day yesterday. I managed to have a service with 12 different units yesterday. I had to call in the help of another padre for some morning services. Fortunately, the day was fine, and where we had services out of doors, we couldn't wish for anything better. One parade I took with three different companies of men, the Major and his officers were present. The major is a nominal R.C.⁷⁷ but he came to my service and, at the close of it, thanked me. He assured me that he never enjoyed a service so much before. He also thanked me on behalf of the men. On Friday, or Saturday, I mean, this same Major lent me his horse — a fine mare and could trot splendidly — to finish my rounds and to get back to my billet with. Yesterday he sent me "home" in his car. He is a very nice man, as you can imagine! A horse or a car he has placed at my disposal, whenever I need one.

I don't know whether I shall remain here until the end of my time or not. Really, I am not anxious for another change before packing up for England. Still, we are under authority and one's life in the Army is one of movement.

Whilst I have been out for a few hours, the postman has been and brought me a letter, but — not from you, my dearest. Still I am quite pleased with it, because it is from my dear "old carrots"⁷⁸. I appreciate a letter from her very much, sent as it is whilst she is in the midst of her Matric.⁷⁹ work. I am glad to learn from Winifred that you are all well. This is very good news indeed. I feel very sorry for dear "old carrots", seeing she cannot get more oranges. I have just eaten two — I am sure they must have weighed a pound each and they were full of juice!! At home, or in England, I expect one would have to pay at least a shilling each for similar oranges. But they cost me nothing and I can have as

⁷⁷ Roman Catholic

⁷⁸ Unidentified woman

⁷⁹ Matriculation exam

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

many more as I desire at the same price. I expect there are more than Winifred who feel a wee bit envious at this!! I take an orange if I am thirsty, for the water out here is never very good or safe. But an orange is always quite safe.

I hope I shall be fortunate enough to hear Winifred's School Concert. I will want quite a nice lot of things to do and nice places to go to when I get back home. For instance, I want to go to one of those fine concerts at the Guildhall. Then, you once suggested that I should keep my clothes clean and respectable, then you would take me to a fine tea room in Plymouth. Well, I am looking forward to that also for, so far, my clothes are quite good and not patched a bit. One of the little treats will be for us to have our "jaunt" in London. What do you say to that, dearie?

I am anticipating an overland journey home. I hope it is so. If it happens so, then I will count myself most fortunate, having on my outward journey come all the way by sea. I may as well see what is to be seen!

I must now stop for lunch! Will you have a little? — tongue and tinned peas, bread and cheese, with the usual cup of tea!

Well, dearest, you are certainly having my letter this time in piecemeal. After lunch I did a little printing of photographs, so as to have a few ready to show you. My album is now quite full with recent snapshots. At 2:30 I went to see Padre Woodhall, had tea at his mess, then went for a walk along the beach for several miles and enjoyed the sea breeze. I got back just in time for dinner and found your letter, and one from Mrs. Iles, awaiting me. How grateful I am to hear from you again. It's very welcome. I have already read it twice before dinner and have read it once since. It's a specially nice letter and it's not a short metre either!! I have simply been dying for such a letter from you, dear wife.

I am very much interested in your account of the Food Question.⁸⁰ I expect I shall have to tighten my belt! At present I am just about my usual weight. I really got stout at Mahemdia. I am wonderfully well now and I don't think that I ever looked more fit. Your suggestion of making daily excursions to the moors, river etc., seems quite a good idea. And really, I have seen very little of the Plymouth country. If I am not with you for Easter, it is quite likely that I shall be with you for Whitsuntide, when Winifred will likely have a little holiday. Then she can join us.

The account of Kathleen's interest in her school lessons interests me very much. Miss Slater is evidently quite a devoted teacher. I am glad that you get her out whenever the weather allows. Has she much colour in her cheeks? I want to see roses on her cheeks when I see her! I am very sorry not to be able to send picture postcards for the children. The price is simply prohibitive — equal to two pence halfpenny each. I am sure neither

⁸⁰ British wartime debate on food supply and distribution

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Kathleen nor Clifford would like postcards at that price!! So, I am taking my own photographs, some of which are fairly successful, though I say it and shouldn't!

Mrs Iles tells me that you have written to her and that she has written to you, giving you the information you ask for. They have sent off another parcel of comforts for the men. I hope it will reach me shortly, or else it will be too late. Anyhow, I will arrange for my successor to have it. How interesting for you to hear from Mrs. Shepherd and to receive her photograph; also, to hear from Mary (Ted's wife) and also from Mrs. P. Viner. It is really wonderful about Flossie's recovery. I hope to see Mr. Shepherd soon, anyhow before I leave, as I hear that his unit is coming into my area and will be included in my list. So, won't it be wonderful to become Mr. Shepherd's padre — for about a week!!

Now I must put the closure on. It's my bedtime now, and I find that I have already written a fair amount. But I will try to write you again in a few days. Love to everybody. Thanks to Kate and Wilson for asking me to make my stay with them a long one. I certainly won't forget it.

Shiploads of kisses to my little girlie and warmest and fondest love to my darling,

Yours ever,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

H'dqtrs.
21st Corps H.A.,
E.E.F.
13 March 1918

My Dearest,

What a delightful week I have already had, although it's just Wednesday. I received another letter from you yesterday, and also some papers — two Leaders, two Christian Worlds and one Public Opinion. The papers will provide me a little reading for the rest of the week. I hope you will be able to keep for me the papers issued between the last ones sent to me and the time I shall reach England. I depend on the Leader so much to keep me in touch with Church matters.

Mr. Gilbert's notes in the Leader do amuse me. One, just to hand, credits Mr. Horne with being in Mesopotamia before coming to Palestine, which is not true; and Gilbert must know this, if he would only think. In the previous notes he had some two weeks before that, he gave credit to Horne again in being with the first troops to enter Jerusalem. This again was not so. At that time, when Jerusalem was taken, Horne and his brigade were on the opposite flank; indeed, I believe he was in hospital. In fact, Horne has not been within 20 miles of Jerusalem up to the present time. I am just afraid that Gilbert's geography, to say nothing of his knowledge of Army movements, is very much at fault, which is perhaps owing to his lack of active service. To know that Mr. Gilbert has been no further than Aldershot during the 3 years and more of Army chaplaincy, and for him to write as he does, is very provoking to many of his co-chaplains. I have written to him twice recently, that is since I came into this area, but nothing is mentioned about my work. Still, I am not anxious a bit to have honour or to be paraded before my church; yet, I think that he ought to be less partial in his information, true or untrue, which he sends to the Leader. Don't you think so, dearest? No doubt others, beside you, dearest, will have often wondered why so little has appeared in the Leader about my work. What I have said is the cause of it. Now, this is a good old grouse, isn't it!

Your letter is very interesting to me again. Glad to hear that Mr. Duck spoke so nicely to your C.E. class. I hope you had a pleasant time in your talk on "The Two Ways". Would you like me to give them a talk when I come? I am also glad that your Winter is being dry and mild. That will just suit you and, fortunately, it allows both you and Kathleen to get out for your walks. Kathleen's prattle about the Moon and the Stars is very interesting to me. You can never give me too much of it. I look forward very much to hearing it for myself. I expect I will realise a great alteration in her. I wonder if I shall find any alteration in you, darling; or if I have altered at all? It will be so nice to have our little family circle again, eh?

I was out all day yesterday. I rode for several miles upon our new light railway. I saw several units; the R.F.C. was one of them. There I saw several of the newest type of

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machines, wonderfully fitted throughout. I expect the news from The Front continues to please you all. This is possibly only the prelude to greater things. I do wish they could make similar "pushes" on the Western Front for, after all, the capture of territory is of great importance, and will be in deciding the whole War. If, for instance, we could take as much territory of German soil as Germany now holds in Belgium and France, what a different aspect there would be on the whole issue; and also, what a change of attitude we would find in Germany! However, we keep hoping that this will soon take place. It will really be a great blessing to see the end of this conflict but, until then, we must still keep our teeth set. Such talk as we have in one of our ministers, Pittwood, is beyond me to understand. We see what pacifism has done for Russia under the ruling of German. And so would it become with England, if we admitted German and victor — yes, even worse. The position of Romania is most pitiable, don't you think so? "How Long, O Lord, How Long",⁸¹ is the cry of all hearts! May God keep us true to the highest purposes!

My cheque will have reached you long ago providing, of course, it had a safe passage and claims could be met without any trouble up to the time of my arrival.

It is now tea time and I must change and wash for the evening. So, goodbye, my darling. Love to all. Kisses to Kathleen.

With warmest love from your own boy,
Dick.

⁸¹ Title and refrain of a religious prayer

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER 68

H'dqtrs.,
21st Corps H.A., E.E.F.
March 17th, 1918

My Dearest,

Again, it is Monday morning and I set myself to do the usual thing, so early in the week – send you a few lines. I was most fortunate last week in receiving two letters from you. We had another mail on Saturday but, alas! there was nothing from my dearest. However, I was not entirely without a letter. I had two, one from Sally and one from Flossie Viner, and papers for 3 weeks. For the whole of last week, I received 5 weeks' papers, so now I am well up to date with the news.

Sally tells me that she and Grannie are quite well and still struggle on to get some of the necessities of life. It is amusing to read Sally's pathetic note about butter, when I remembered what you have said about its substitutes! She also tells me about Ethel having to go out at 6 o/c in the morning, and waiting for hours to get a little meat, having to take her baby with her. It does seem a very good thing that the Food Controller is in earnest at last, and has begun the rationing method. I think it will save a great deal of worry and unnecessary waste of time, if it is properly carried out. We find it no hardness in the Army. I think Mrs. Jones Davis always writes so sensibly in the Leader. I always read her articles. By the way, the article by John Swindon on "To Him that is Weary", I thought very good.

What a wonderful recovery Flossie Viner is making. She is able to walk up and down stairs now, and she has been going out to several places for tea. They are all well in Witney and expect the flying school opening this month.

The present government of rationing doesn't seem to permit any holiday-making, unless one takes their own rations. Such a difficulty, I know, is not insuperable, for we do it quite regularly and think nothing of the supposed hardship. When I return, I suppose I will have to make arrangements for my physical needs. What times we are living in! If the Prime Minister would only take the drink menace⁸² in hand, and strangle it before it strangles us, he would have the warm support of all sane and common-sensed people. Well might Arthur Mee⁸³ send out his S.O.S.⁸⁴ signal! We are far from being free from it out here, I can assure you. When will the people learn better!

I am very much interested in the correspondence in the Leader about Methodist union. We are absolutely one out here. In fact, the Army will not acknowledge any separations among the Free Churches and Presbyterians. It is teaching many of us a valuable lesson.

⁸² Harmful addiction to alcohol

⁸³ Writer, journalist and educator

⁸⁴ Emergency call ("save our souls")

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

And, in the services, including the singing, we never know one from t'other. And yet, notwithstanding this, I was surprised to find the other day in a chat with Padre Woodhall, Wesleyan, that he thought it was all a waste of time at home to bring about one Methodist Church, unless, as he inferred, that we all became Wesleyan Methodists. He is of a firm belief that, if union came, about half would pass over to the Anglicans. This is certainly astounding! Yet, I must confess that among the younger ministers (Wesleyans) there is a strong leaning towards Anglicanism, just as in the younger Anglican clergy there is a strong leaning towards Roman Catholicism. This is a tendency one is finding out. However, if we cannot get one British Methodism, we can have the next best thing, union with the United Methodist Church. I sincerely hope it will come soon.

We are having another spell of wet weather. I don't expect we shall have much more now. We had a nasty sandstorm last Thursday, and I was out in it all. The sand gets through one's clothing in a remarkable way. Yesterday I had my usual services and had a happy day. Now, what is actually going to take place this week, I don't know. We are likely going under canvas again. We must wait and see. I would rather stay where I am now until the end of my time. Whilst I am anticipating going down The Line a fortnight today, I yet don't know definitely whether this will be so, or not. It will depend entirely on my movement order coming through. I must wait for that. Oh! how glad I shall be to be back with you again!! Excuse more now. Love to all. Heaps and heaps of kisses for Kathleen. Warmest and fondest love to my own Darling.

Yours always,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER 69

21st Corps H.Q., E.E.F.

21/3/18

My dear Sweetheart,

I am really expecting to hear from you today, but I thought that I would just write you a few lines now, and possibly finish it tonight or tomorrow or the next day!! In little over half an hour I will be going out and I will likely not return until evening.

Since I last wrote to you — on Monday — I have shifted from the bungalow in the orange groves. Still, I have not gone far away, only to the other side of the town. This time I am living in a mansion with the Y.M.C.A. — the late German consul's house. It is really a very fine place. Seeing that my time is near the end, I didn't think it worthwhile moving with my unit on Wednesday. Then, for the next few weeks, I will be able to do my work just as well from this place as from the new centre; and so, the General gave his permission to make my quarters here, for which I am very glad. It is by far the best billet I have had since I joined the Army. I have a fine feather bed — a German. It appeals to me immensely! Then there is a very useful convenience⁸⁵ which provides one with a sense of English life. Crowds of men are coming and going all day long. The secretary, too, is a very fine young fellow. The secretary etc. are all Australians — from Sydney. So, I am really comfortably placed, and yet I hope it won't be for long. I am very anxious to cover the distance which now separates us. If my movement order came at once, I don't see how I could possibly get home before April 18th. It will really mean 3 weeks travelling from my location, providing I can catch a boat straight away. So, I will really be lucky after all if I can be in England before April has gone.

Well, I had to leave off writing my letter yesterday. I was out all day. I was in Ludd and Ramla. Ludd — you will perhaps remember me describing it to you some time ago — was the home of St. George, Britain's patron saint. Christianity, from the earliest Apostolic days, has existed in this town. The cathedral of St. George is partly Christian (Greek Orthodox) and partly Moslem. The surrounding country is very beautiful, for the cultivated land is now covered with green fields. Then there are the olive groves, almond and orange groves. I will be able to show you some snapshots of Ludd and other places by and by.

Well, your expected letter did not reach me yesterday. I fully expected one. I suppose it is on the way! We don't always get what we expect, do we!

After getting back last night and after dinner, I went to the Y.M.C.A. cinema hall and heard a very good concert. The singing was nothing grand, but the other items were excellent. It was given by some Lancashire men. The comic was very fine. And another

⁸⁵ W.C.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

man who did feats with balls, plates etc. was the best I have ever seen. I suppose he is a professional at the game, when in private life. We get all sorts in the Army nowadays. I am living on 3 meals a day now. I wonder if I can do that when I get home? If I can, it would mean the saving of a meal a day, seven in one week etc. etc. Would not that be wartime economy? The first meal is at 7:30, the second at 12:30 and the last at 5:30.

I have no more news to send and must once more make arrangements for Sunday: I will be out all the morning. So, goodbye. Love to all. Shiploads of kisses for Kathleen and an ocean of love for you, my dearest.

Your old boy,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

LETTER 70

21st Corps H.A., E.E.F.

[Est: 25th March 1918]

My Darling,

Very many thanks for your letter of Feb. 27th. I am glad to hear that my letter describing my visit to Jerusalem and Bethlehem reached you safely and also the cheque which I sent you. I am surprised to hear that the C.A.A. [?] are not receiving deposits at present. I wonder why? I presume the Government has something to do with it.

You have been having a gay time! I won't be able to keep pace with such a life!! It would be too much for me! However, things may quieten down in Plymouth by the time I reach it. Glad to have such good reports of your Junior C.E. You seem successful in securing speakers for the meetings, which is a great help. Do you still have your helper? You are not alone, I hope, in carrying on your work. Pleased to hear Miss Richards did so well for Plymouth again.

So, you prefer the rationing scheme. I really think myself that it will be much the better way. What a pity it was not done long ago. It would have saved a great deal of worry and would have preserved our reserves. But I hope it has not been applied too late. Control of the drink trade is most pitiable, and will remain as the eternal disgrace of the Premier and his Government.

Fancy having to pay 12/6 for a pair of shoes for Kathleen! I am well provided in that way for years to come, perhaps for a half-a-dozen years, at least. I know that I have two good pairs with you, and I have 3 pairs here. You see, we can get our things, boots and clothing at a much cheaper rate and everything is of the very best quality for wear. I am getting well stocked with what will be useful after I have left the Army. As I once said before, if they stocked Ladies' goods, then I would get you something. However, it is not so here. There may be centres in England.

Since I last wrote you, I have not had any exciting experiences, nor have I anything special to relate to you. On Friday night, I dined out with a Colonel Bell and his fellow-officers and had a very nice time. On Saturday afternoon, I went to hear the Band of the _____ Division, which was in the Boulevard. There we saw a bit of Jaffa's better life — Jews turning out in their Sunday best, and some of the Jewesses looked really smart. We have 3 Sundays a week in Jaffa and in most places in Palestine. The Moslems have their Sunday on Friday, the Jews on Saturday and ours, such as it is, on Sunday proper.

Then, on Saturday night, I went to the cinema (Y.M.C.A.) where the concert party, "Thistletops", gave a very good concert; the hall was packed, even to suffocation. I almost came out before the end, because it was so hot. Yesterday I had quite a large parade service, one of the best I have ever had. About 200 were present. The singing went so

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

lustily. I took the service in the Y.M.C.A. cinema hall. There were quite 300 present; it was so inspiring to talk to so many men, who had come for the special purpose of worship. We had a good meeting.

Padre Horne came to see me on Friday and had lunch with me. He is looking very well — much better than when I saw him last October. I expect him and Woodhall in to see me this morning, as well as another U.B. Padre McBeth. It is Monday and so we take a little relaxation.

Well, I am still anxiously waiting for my movement order. I am quite unsettled now, as you can quite understand. I hope it will come soon.

I heard yesterday of the big offensive on the Western Front by the Germans. From all accounts and information we have, we ought to be able to hold them and inflict unprecedented losses upon them. We are most optimistic as to the prospective offence here. What a blessing, if we could only give Johnnie⁸⁶ the knock-out blow. I wonder how long Germany will be able to hold the offensive? Maybe it is now the beginning of the end. Oh! if it only were!!

Glad you are all keeping so well. I may be home as soon as any of my letters sent to you now. You have ceased to write to me now, I expect. Don't forget to make a note of all you do, so I may be well informed as soon as I arrive.

Love to you all. Very many kisses to my own Kathleen and fondest and tenderest love to my own Darling,

Yours ever,
Dick.

⁸⁶ The other, foreigner, enemy

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

E.E.F.

March 31st, 1918

My Darling Nance,

I expect you are wondering where I am. Well, I am still waiting at the Y.M.C.A., and my movement order to proceed to the base cannot possibly be much longer in reaching me. I know it is on the way but, just when it will reach me, I cannot say. On Friday, I had a note from the Principal Chaplain telling me to keep myself in readiness to proceed to the base any day. So, the actual time of my reaching England is more than I can really say. Padre Walkie, I hear, was 28 days on the way home. If I am so long, don't be alarmed.

I haven't much to write about. I am putting in a full day today, Easter Sunday. I had a service this morning at 9 o/c, another at 10:30. There was a nice crowd of men present at both services. This afternoon, I took the Bible Class at the Y.M.C.A. Tonight I am speaking in the cinema hall. One of the men is singing a solo. He was choirmaster for Rev. G. Ayre when he was in Leeds. He is a very good singer. I have met a Mr. Marest who knows Wilson and all of you. He lived in Guernsey and conducted the Seaman's Mission at St. Peter Port.

I have just received my orders for the base!! I shall leave tomorrow. I must make ready. So, excuse more at present. Heaps of news when we meet. Shiploads of kisses and love for you and Kathleen.

Your fond old hubby,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

ALEXANDRIA

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

No. 2 Officers Mess
Mustapha, Alexandria
8/4/18

My Darling,

I am writing this on the chance it may reach you before I touch England. It is not possible to cable from here now and possibly mails are going regularly, while we, who are waiting for embarkation, and count ourselves more important than many letters, are held back. However, what we cannot understand now, we may know afterwards. I have been here since Tuesday night, April 2. I called at Cairo on my way and saw Mr. Percy Jones. He is looking very well after his operation. We had luncheon together. I only had 3½ hours in Cairo altogether. I have been seeing Alexandria for the last few days. I wish you were here, darling; I would not then be waiting to go to England. I sent a draft for £25 to my bankers in London. I found that I was carrying too much money about with me. Isn't that a nice little saving since I sent you the last cheque? On Thursday, I visited the catacombs, which are very fine indeed. They are Roman. I also saw Pompey's Pillar and catacomb. I got a decent snapshot of the Pillar. Yesterday I visited some gardens in the afternoon. After the morning's service I had a nice walk along the beach to an unexpected and unlooked-for bay, Stanley Bay. There was a great deal of bathing, surf bathing, but I did not bathe. I need a new costume. It was quite a delight to see the children playing among the sand.

I was most delighted to have your letter yesterday, written on March 5th. It was so nice to hear that you are all well. I am amused to hear what you want me to bring you. Tell Kathleen that, if I could get an aeroplane for her, I would fly home with it, which would be much better than waiting so long here. I would certainly be able to laugh at the "tin fish". I don't think we can be so very [...] in sailing now. Some have been waiting here for four weeks. I shall be glad to get away: it is ruining away with too much money unnecessarily. I will be so glad to see you all again and especially you, my dearie Kathleen.

Now I must close. The post is just leaving. I hope to outrun the letter. I am wonderfully fit. I hope to find you all the same. Love to all. Kisses for Kathleen.

And warmest love for you, dear self.

Yours always!
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

2 Officers Mess
Mustapha, E.E.F.
[Est: date: 14 April 1918]

My Darling,

I am still waiting for further orders and won't be at all sorry when they come through. Perhaps it is going to be a case of "So far shalt thou go but no farther" in view of the recent Manpower Bill, conscripting all clergymen. This changes the whole of my position. I shall have to remain where I am, or perhaps be "called up" soon after I have left the Army. Anyhow, I am going to have the trip home, unless they ask me here to reconsider my decision. Then there may be a chance of a home appointment. The arrangement with Brinkworth Circuit will, in the natural order of things, become void. What a world we are in! No arrangement seems of any worth at all. We can no longer do as we wish, or wish sometimes as we ought. It is hoped that the whole War will soon finish and let us be back home, to carry on there our usual work. But, until then, the finish of the War, I suppose we must stick it. When I reach London, I must see Mr. Horton and also call at the War Office. But, before I go there, I am most anxious to see you, dearest, to talk over the new situation. So, I will wire you to meet in London and I will meet your train at Paddington. You had better bring your sugar with you; don't forget.

I am passing the time as well as I can. It is rather miserable waiting, though; and how much longer it is going to be, I cannot say. We may have to leave at a few hours' notice, so we have to remain on the spot nearly all the time. I had my first bathe this morning for this season. There's a good deal of bathing now. I enjoyed it very much, and found that I am quite out of practice. Now I must keep on with it.

I am taking the United Board service tomorrow morning for Padre Allen in this camp. I wold rather have been simply a worshipper, but I couldn't very well refuse to take the service.

I hope I reach you before this scribble. I send it so that you won't worry about my welfare. Love to all. Kisses to Kathleen and warmest love for you, my darling.

Yours,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Mustapha
Alexandria, E.E.F.
[Est: date: 18 April 1918]

My Darling,

I am writing you very little now because I am not sure of my letters getting through to you. If I could only feel sure that they would reach you before I arrived, then I would send you a lengthy letter. However, this I am not doing now.

Needless to say, I am absolutely tired of waiting here. And yet my case is far from being so bad as some of the others. Some have been waiting now for six or seven weeks. I suppose matters on the Western Front account for it. The pity of it is that waiting here means heavy expenses for messing etc. However, I am perfectly safe and might be much worse off than at present. My cablegram, sent on Friday, will let you know that I am safe in Alexandria. The prospects of sailing are no brighter. Yet, it may all change in a night. I was quite sure that I should at least be with you for Whitsuntide. but that seems most improbable now.

My birthday passed off most quietly. I missed your good wishes, but I know they were with me all the same. I hope Winifred had a happy birthday. It is a year ago today since our boat left Plymouth and we had our last long look at dear old England; then made our dash for the dark waters of the Channel. Since then, I seem to have lived a long life and I honestly confess that I feel much older than I did.

Again, dearest, let me say that when I touch an English port I will wire you. I will meet you at the Great Western Hotel, Paddington. Send your reply wire to this Hotel. On your wire, say what time your train leaves Plymouth.

Heaps of kisses to Kathleen and warmest love and fondest affection to you,

Yours,
Dick.

P.S. Post just leaving. Excuse haste.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Mustapha, E.E.F.
4/5/18

My Darling,

What a very long time it is since I wrote to you. It is almost a fortnight ago, I know, but I have been hoping against hope to sail any day; and so, I have thought it not worthwhile to send any letters to you. Now, my hopes are at zero as to leaving this place for England for some weeks, that I think it wise to send you a scribble, on the off-chance of it reaching you before I do. The prospects of an early sailing are very poor indeed. We are compelled to wait here and we are all eating our hearts away. It would have been much better if they had kept us all at our work until a few days before our boat was to leave. I have been waiting now since April 1st — a very bad day, I know, to leave one's work. But my patience, to say nothing of my money, has been spent. One cannot settle down to anything serious as regards reading or writing. The immediate neighbourhood has been most thoroughly tramped by me and others, and interest in our Alexandrian conditions has lost its fascination because the newness has passed away. If I only had you and Kathleen here, I would have a most happy time. But you are missing; then my lot is far from happy. How I pine for your cheerful spirit etc!! Each day I have a bathe in Stanley Bay, which is an ideal place. Most days I go into town to one of the clubs to read the papers, telegrams etc. My present companion is Padre Dunnet, who has a parish in the North-west of Scotland. We get on very well together. We came out together a year ago. The season opens here in a week or so, when the "wealthy" people leave Cairo etc., and spend the summer in Alexandria, which is very much cooler.

I hope you have had my cable and also the letters I have sent you. I will possibly send another cable in a few days. I hope you are not worrying about me, darling. It is the thought of you doing so that worries me. I hope my fears are groundless.

I met Reg. Iles a week ago, today, and we had a very pleasant day of it. Did I tell you that I saw Mr. Shepherd here? I fancy he has left now, presumably for France. The last time I saw him, he was telling me that he was going to apply for a commission when he left Egypt. Last Sunday I visited the cousin of Miss Ransome (of Witney). They have a very nice house close to the camp. I was there for tea and supper, going to church with them. It was a pleasant day. Yesterday I arranged an impromptu concert in our mess, which was quite a success. Several have asked me to arrange another for next week. I will probably do so, providing we are here (of course).

By the time I get home now, which will take about a month from the time I embark, I don't think it worthwhile to take up home service before we go to our circuit. I see the Government has withdrawn the clergy conscription clause; so, we are left entirely free.

Now I must hastily conclude, as the post box is cleared almost immediately. Love to all. Kisses for Kathleen and fondest and tenderest love to you, my darling.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Yours ever,
Dick.

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

No. 2 Officers Mess
Mustapha, E.E.F.
11/5/18

My Darling Wife,

I hope you are receiving the short scribbles I am sending you, for I know you must be feeling very anxious about me. But I am sure your anxiety for my welfare cannot be any more than mine for your good. It is so very long ago since I heard from you that I am very much concerned about you and Kathleen. Your last letter was dated March 5th and very much may have taken place since then. Needless to say, I am very much disappointed at still being held up here. At the earliest, I cannot be in England before June now. There is no immediate likelihood of us leaving here for some time yet, some say for quite another month. However, whenever it comes, the sooner the better. I shall be glad to say goodbye to Egypt. I am having a good time in any way, but you are not here and that alters the whole case. This week the hot weather has begun and today I have got into my shorts, which is a great relief. We are compelled by a G.R.O.⁸⁷ to wear our helmets now from 9 o/c to 4 o/c. They are very needful too. I have so little to do that I find very little time to do anything of a serious nature. I try to do a bit of reading, but I find it most difficult to concentrate. One thing I am doing with diligence and pleasure — bathing every day. I cannot tell you how much I enjoy this. The conditions for bathing here are ideal. Yesterday I swam across the bay 4 times, which is quite 300 yards across, entering straight away from the rocks with a dive, being well out of my depth at once. Now it seems impossible to sink: I got my confidence and I suppose that is everything. This week I have been practicing diving and it is simply glorious. Mr. Dunnet tells I dive very well. Dunnet has swum all his life, but we are equal now. In fact, I left him a long way behind yesterday in swimming across the bay. I swim best on my back. So, each day I spend about 2 hours in my bathing exercises, an hour of which is in the water. Oh! if only you were here. It is such a splendid bay for children and there is a fine pool, ideal for learning to swim. When I do return, we really must have a few weeks on the Cornish coast before going to circuit work.

Talking about circuit work, I wonder what Conference will do if I am not back by Conference!! That, again, we cannot alter. If they think fit not to station me, well and good. I have been here nearly six weeks now, others have been here 3 months, so surely, we cannot be much longer before something is done to get us away. Some are getting away by paying their own passages, but I have not been able to bring myself to think it wise to pay £20 to get home, when the Government have promised to get me home. And so, for the present, I leave it at that. Now the time has gone on so far, there is not the same necessity for me to see you in London. I will be able to do my business in a day and then will journey direct to Plymouth. Still, I will wire when I reach England, and if you decide to have a few days in London, I shall be delighted. Send your reply wire to Great Western

⁸⁷ General Routine Order

LETTERS FROM EGYPT AND PALESTINE, 1917-1918

Hotel, Paddington. I am preaching in St. Andrews' Church tomorrow for Dr. Mackie, Church of Scotland, Alexandria. So, today, my time will be taken up with preparation. The week has been taken up with nothing of importance. The chief thing is to relieve the time as quick as possible, for one so easily gets soon depressed. Waiting is so tiring, and especially when I remember that my time here is keeping me from you.

However, I am glad to say that I am wonderfully well. I hope you, Kathleen and all the others are as well as I feel. Love to all. Kisses to Kathleen. Warmest tenderest love to you, my darling.

Your devoted Hubby,
Dick.



Summer dress, beside bell tent