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Norton, Henry Thomas, 1880-1916

Letters

Auckland War Memorial Museum – Tāmaki Paenga Hira

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POSTCARD

Somewhere in ?

5/ 5/ 16

To my Dear little Toddles,

I am so glad you pray for Daddy boy, & never forget. I love to read your long letters and to know that you are thinking of me so far away, but I will soon be home & I will have lots of bites and kisses. God bless you my Toddles. Heaps & heaps of love & kisses,

from Soldier Daddy

Wishing you many happy returns of your Birthday, Dec 19. 1916 X X X X X

The writing (on the front of the Postcard) means, I love you brave Soldier who is defending our Country. Please accept this Bouquet in remembrance of me.

"Je t'aime bien, soldat. Qui défend notre France; Accepte ce bouquet, gage de reconnaissance"

(Photocopy the original for book?)

Envelope; GLASGOW

8.15 P.M.

MAY 9 16

Mrs H. T. Norton

Rhodes Terrace

"Goldie's Brae"

Wellington

New Zealand

IN THE TRENCHES

FRANCE

May 7 1916

Dear Wife & Chum

You will be surprised when you see the P.O. stamp on this letter. A friend of mine is going to England for a short holiday and told me he would post a letter for me. I have put in for a holiday myself & when my turn comes, if possible I will go to Derby to your Uncle John. I suppose I will find him, although I do not know when I will get away, but my turn will come soon.

And then I will be able to write you such long letters. It is horrible to have our letters censored. I cannot write as I would like to, when I know that probably someone else will read them before you. There is nothing private about it, and it is the only part of this soldier life that I resent. Still it is very necessary as a lot of information would leak out and everything has to be done secretly in the army. My friend will be home in Scotland in sixteen hours from here, so we are not so very far away after all.

By the time you receive this letter I may be on my way home again, if I have good luck. We are just waiting our turn which will come in less than a week, and we are counting the hours till we can get a cut at the enemy. Just fancy after ten months training

in a few hours I will be able to do my bit. I am very excited and looking forward to the moment, & order to charge. What a glorious time we will have making the fiends run. We will show them what we can do, you may be sure.

The Din is terrific. We are right up now and at night the sight is marvellous & awful but how I am itching to get at them.

My new work is very interesting. I am supplied with the very best equipment that money can buy, four of us under an officer and we have practically permission to go anywhere. We are specialists in one of the most important branches of the service. In my last letter I told you I had been picked out for it. Well Dearie I cannot tell you anything more about myself although I would like to explain to you just what my work is but I am honour bound not to, but I am so well & strong & as happy as I can be away from you. I wish I could give you a big hug & kiss this Sunday afternoon. I have just been picturing us all round the fire, and myself telling you of the wonderful sights & places I have been to. I will be able to tell you yarns for hours, & many are the nights we will spend going over my adventures.

So far I have had a wonderfully good time, and the best of everything, and real good luck, and really think I will soon get home. Everything is so prepared it must soon be all over, and then, oh dear, how the time will fly, and I will be with you all again.

I wish I could start now Chum. I am longing for you all, & our dear little home so happy & bright, and what a job you will have breaking me in again too. I am afraid I am getting very rough, callous & brutal. Brute strength & perseverance is going to carry me through this job. I can wear wet clothes & boots & sleep anywhere & anyhow & eat everything that comes my way. So just plan how you are going to civilise me. It seems like heaven to think of a soft bed, white sheets & blankets, so clean & sweet and just fancy a table with a white cloth & cups & saucers and a tea pot, & best of all to have you, Dear old Girl fussing round. I think you will spoil me Dear, but I do not forget to pray for you all, & read the Service every day, and it helps me such a lot to know that you are praying & thinking of me, Sweetheart.

In my last letter I sent you birthday cards. I thought they would be nice & early, and I may not be back here again to obtain the same sort. I have not yet received your cable. We have been on the move all the time, so it has been delayed. I may get it any minute. I hope & trust you are all well. Next mail I expect replies from you to my letters from Egypt telling me you are wearing the silks I sent you. I hope you liked them & what fun you had opening the box. I had a job to keep the weight under 11 lbs.

I cannot send you anything from here, not even Scenic Post Cards. I wish I could. They would be so interesting, but I can tell you all about the places. So I have enclosed a buttercup & wild flowers in this note.

I will now be able to get plenty of paper & envelopes. I have had them supplied for my new work. I find there are several Nortons & one Horton in our lot, so if you see the name in the paper don't think it is me, unless for a V.C. I am after that.

If the letters are not regular, you will know we have been unable to post them. Of course you will see by the papers, just where we are fighting. You will know much more than we do. We get an English paper here only a day old, so we know how things are

going with us. We will win for sure, and I will win my star on my shoulder too. If the war lasts long enough, we will be able to exterminate every one of the Devils.

Last night I had a splendid hot bath with plenty of Sunlight soap. I did enjoy it. We can get a swim in a river too, but it is so cold.

One can see humour in most things. A month ago we were pestered with flies & sand. Now we cannot lie down on the grass for frogs, It is horrible to sit down on a frog & hear it go squash, and then we have to get a stick & scrape the remains off, but we are getting used to it.

At evening I go for a walk by myself & watch the sun set and think of home and wonder what you are doing, and how you are getting along without me, your old grumpy boy. Kisses for the children & my dear old Chum. I send you my best thoughts & all my love Dearie

Your soldier Husband

Harry Norton

X X X X X

We have just had the tip to pack our kits ,& we are off again in the morning. We are flitting about like birds now.

God bless & keep you all at home.

Letter No 14

France

9/ 5/ 16

My Dear Darling Wife

I have just got a chance to send you a letter all on my own. A friend of mine is going to England & will post this for me, so I can tell you all about myself & what I have been doing .

Well first of all, I send you my best love. All of it Dearie, and I hope you are all well at home, Oh how I wish I was back again with you all. I am dreadfully home-sick and full of it, being so long away. I long & pray for my return to my loved ones. How I miss you all, especially to have you Dear heart, fussing around me, and Oh , how I long for a kiss & to see your Dear face again , and to hold you in my arms, and the children too. I love them so. I often picture to myself at home again. How happy we will be. In your last letter you write, you want me back. I want you too, Dearie with all my heart & soul.

I have not had any word or cable yet from you about the "New Recruit". I do hope you are well, and all has gone well. I am almost nervous to hear the news, but one of our boys had to wait for five weeks for a cable, so I suppose as we have been moving about it has been delayed. I am so anxious. I wish I was home again with you all. I often dream of you sweetheart. I do hope you are well & strong. I am so fit myself, strong & in the best of health.

Dearie, I have written so far in this letter as a Husband & father. Now I must write as a soldier.