

Transcription

Copy of a letter written by George Francis Murphy at the rest camp on Lemnos Island near Gallipoli on 2 January 1916

Lemnos

2/1/16

Dear Girl,

I presume this letter will be posted in Egypt, so I shall write it in installments.

The 20th Bn moves out tomorrow, - we expect to go the following day.

New Years' Day was a holiday, but it was a surprise for everyone. We were all up till about 1 a.m. – by special permits, and it was a lovely night too. – The boats kicked up a terrific row, - so did we. – Then all hands turned in and planned a good day. About 2 hours later the rain fell in torrents, and the camp was under water in about 5 minutes. – Such a mess was never seen anywhere. – The Bg? Major had 6" of river in his tent, - in the midst of frantic efforts to haul boots &c on to his bed the bunk gave way. –

I poured all day – Today I got 2 horses from Division and Major Goodsell & I went to Castro [Myrina/Kastro <http://www.angelfire.com/super2/greece/limnos-villages.html>], 9 mls away – It is the Capital (ancient) of the island. – The track (!!) is about

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1 ft wide in places only, and at one time you are on a mountain top, and at others deep down in the valley. – The old Castle at Castro is worth seeing. – Huge iron cannon balls, ranging size from a cricket ball to a large football. – There is also chain shot there, and a bronze cannon, dated 1533, Philip V of Spain. – Numerous Turkish tombstones are about. The Turks captured the island some few years ago. – One sees evidence of their visit – there are no girls between the ages of 16 & 40 anywhere – all gone to Turkey.

The inhabitants live in villages, - there are no detached farmhouses anywhere. In Castro, the Turks and Gks never mixed – each town is quite distinct. – The windmills of the island are of the time of Don Quixote – most weird and wonderful – I haven't seen a wooden fence anywhere. – only walls build from the loose stones lying about. – Most, if not all of the houses are built of the same materials –

At Therma, there are hot springs – A marble bath, with water at about 140° was the most delightful thing I've seen for months. – It's the first good was since July 24th.

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I have plenty of photographs to send home if the films turn out O.K. I'll do them on the boat going over. – I also got a number of Gk coins and more stamps for Boy. The male populace here have no seat to their pants. Instead they have a baglike appendage. – The reason given by some is that they believe Christ will make another visit to earth and, that next time He will be born of man, and each hopes to have his bag filled – In very few cases have I noted this 'bag' missing from the male population. – I plead ignorance regarding the other sex. –

The plough is as in biblical pictures. The beast of burden is the donkey. – They don't use horses or carts, of any kind. On the way back in inky darkness, we jumped trenches, ditches, &c, and "Goody"

got an awful spill – I thought he was “out”, but his leg is bruised only. – He fell into the trench, the horse was too wide or the trench too narrow - so the neddy simply formed a roof for him. G.

6/1/15 [sic]

At Sea. The day after our visit to Castro

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Bg Gen Holmes inspected the Bn. – Later in the day we got orders to move the next morning – Marched at 0850 to Sarpi, where we saw labourers at work on roads. – About 20 of them in two ranks, with an Ganger in front and about 3 overseers on the flanks Each has as sawn off pile can 2 ft x 14” x14” with two pieces of wood to serve as handles one on each side – with this they tamp the metal in place – The Ganger, about 6 ft 3” high sings a song, and they join in the chorus, occasionally an overseer gets loose with a thick cane. – They get 10 P.T. (Piastres) (about 2/7) (they earn the 7) per day and rations. We came on board the P & O boat, S.S. Simla and pulled out into the bay. We got out at about 18 min to 3 this morning, and are now moving along just about 300 x behind a cruiser

I’ve been developing photos all day.

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I’m wondering now if I will get any recognition of work done during the [?]. I was holding a line from Quinns to Thompson’s Lookout, in front of the German Officer’s Trench. I withdrew every man, sending 160 away the first night, - and the remainder the next night, in batches of 175 at 1800, 100 odd at ?1900, and left 50 in trenches till midnight – Then I sent them (at 10 min intervals) in batches 16, 17 and 17. On Pluggers Plateau which is about 400 ft high, and covers the beach, there were 8 machine guns, 75 men of ?th Division & 50 of 18th Bn. I was in command of the lot, and our job was to hold the Turks off until the troops got away. We had 7 days’ food and none of us expected to get away alive. Well, we got away and, and lost nothing, although under slight shellfire. The Turks opened up a heavy fire as we withdrew, but our bluff was so good that 24 hrs later, they bombarded our trenches for 6 hrs, and then made a desperate attack on them. The Navy blew them to bits.

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Well, I’ll be sending you on a batch or so of films. – I got the 2 packs? of Soltona? – you will find the Glossy variety better for details. Some of these should enlarge to a good picture. I am printing off one copy only – so that you may identify films &c Will you let Mrs Paul have a few and also RGOR? If you do not recognise any film, print a picture and post to me, numbering it. –

I am sending Form 9 to you. Also some few stamps. I wish you wd send me that catalogue if you have it marked, so that if we go to Europe later on (probable) I’ll know what to get. – I shall also send on the Gk Coins, and my diary (1915)

I got the sheepskin vest from Bn today. Also 3 parcels from you (One containing a cake (Yum!!))

Well girl, I had better write to RGOR, Malet & others.

Love to all at Vaucluse.

Your loving Geo.