Letter No. 16

R.M.S.P. "ASTURIAS."

Aug. 8th 1915.

Dear Mother.

My letter begun, finished yesterday & posted this a.m. @ Malta was rather unsatisfactory, some days or another. At last the Mediterranean comes up to my expectation & is wonderfully blue, dark, but intense; & so did Gibraltar.

Having sent off your letter yesterday we had a chance to see over the boat & it really is a wonder! I had no idea it was so large. There are six decks, the top ones I described in my last. The finest Ward of all is on the lowest one of all & contains 30 odd beds, & everything looks most convenient — This is also where the kitchen is & oh is not wonder the food is rather chilled

by the time it reaches the dining-saloon on the top deck, in spite of there being an elevator.

Last night we were all more or less excited as we had orders to be all packed, the Col. having been told he would receive orders @ Malta, & while he doubted if any of us would land here, felt we ought to be prepared. On arriving within half a mile of the most populated part we anchored, & a lender came out to know who we were etc. & per usual they knew nothing about us, & we were told to wait while they cabled London. We arrived about 5 a.m. & at 11 a.m. heard we were to proceed to Alexandria, much to everyone's delight, for none of us were keen about Malta, especially as we had been hearing fearful tales about the present lack of water, & prevalance of Malta fever.

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I don't quite know what I expected, but certainly Malta in the distance is ~~quite~~ very different from what I had pictured it. The mass of buildings, built of stone that tones in exactly with the soil, & the entire ~~lot~~ lack of color – no green of any sort, is hot & depressing, especially in the bright sun-light, though most picturesque just as the sun was rising. I did not put at all tempted to leave the boat & settle there, much as I would like to have spent a day or so sight-seeing. This has been such a gorgeous day, the first time since we started a week ago, that the air has felt dry – although each

day has been fine the atmosphere has been decidedly sticky. I am just beginning to realize what a long distance we are from home — imagine not getting an answer to this for nearly 3 months!! We have all decided already what Xmas presents from home will be and to the question, I laugh and we definitely get settled some where, probably our mail won't be so un-satisfactory as we imagine. Well au revoir for to-day — will add a few more lines before arriving.

Aug. 10th Just wish you "many Happy Returns" as may we spend your next birthday together. Have had a lovely day — hot — but most fortunate in having a nice cool breeze. Have practically seen no land since leaving Malta. Expect to get in Alexandria early in a.m.

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Aug. 11th 1915: C

~~The~~ Alexandria Harbour.

The excitement all day has been intense, & its difficult just to know where to begin. I awoke this a.m. to find we had anchored about 5 o'clock in Alexandria Harbour, but hearing we would probably remain here for several hours before landing, did not rush about getting up. Had breakfast at 8 a.m. After lunch the Col. having received no orders, or in fact not being able to get in touch with anyone on shore, got tired of waiting & with the O.C. of the boat a Major Cipps, went to shore in a small boat. On seeing Alexandria from

From the ship we all were
much enthusiastic & delighted
we were coming here, instead
of landing at Malta. The
Harbour is most picturesque,
& the buildings in the distance
like a piece of stage scenery,
so perfect & typical of pictures
one has seen of the East, with
occasional palm trees dotted
here & there. There are boats
without number in the Harbour,
dozens of brigs & schooners,
belonging to the enemy &
interned for the time being,
several war-ships, hospital ships,
passenger boats etc. & of course
a constant stream of small
yachts & small sailing vessels,
with their picturesque large &
curved sails. Fortunately
for us we again have a cool
breeze blowing, & while it is hot
it is not unbearable.

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Well to proceed with the news. The Col. Laving departed, who should arrive on the scene but same naval man with the orders, & you can't imagine the disappointment & excitement caused by the announcement that No I (we - us & co) & No III under Col. Casgrain were to proceed to Lemnos a small island 40 miles from the Dardanelles. You can't imagine the shock, for while it had been whispered as a possibility when in London, the officers on this boat said it was an impossibility for no women could be sent there.

They had told us dreadful tales about the place, and which have since been contradicted, so wait depeat as they may be wrong.

Well all kinds of rumours having been going the rounds, but finally Col. McKee has returned & confirmed the report, so evidently we are to go; but he also added that it is considered cooler there, so my spirits immediately rose. No 3 Stationary Hospital (otherwise Queen's from Kingston) are to go to Cairo, & while at first we were terribly envious of them, after all we will be sure from a professional point of view & any way there is no choice so why grumble.

I'm not going to tell you all the rumours about the place, for they vary so much & so will wait until I can tell you

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But all agree no European women have been there, so we ought to creat somewhat of a sensation.

It is now 5 p.m. & there is I am afraid no chance of our landing to-day, but we hope to do so in the a.m. & Col. McKee says we will probably remain here until Sat. I believe we are to be transferred to another boat, much to everyone's regret.

We are all beginning to feel quite exhausted after our day of un-rest, though we have done little except lean over the rail, looking for news, & seeing what there was to be seen. In fact this is the first time I have sat down to-day.

more & more

Each day we feel the ways of Military life are strange. You are rushed off without proper equipment & land somewhere to find you are not expected, & waste time waiting for orders, when you long to be out getting necessaries.

There was talk of sending us on immediately but Col. McKee has insisted on same time for he says the men must have different clothing, for at present they have nothing but flannel shirts & heavy uniforms, in fact what they have been wearing all winter in France.

I simply can't realize I am away off here in the East, even this glimpse is of the greatest interest, & while the day may come when we will regret the day we had to come to a hot climate, at present it seems well