

Alexander Mee's Letters to Jessie – Transcribed

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8 August 1917

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A

This is the letter marked with the letter "A" produced to Jessie Mee at the time of her swearing her Affidavit before me this 17th day of September 1918 – F S Brent – A Solicitor of the Supreme Court of New Zealand

In France Somewhere

August 8 - 1917

My Dear Jessie

As I have just heard today their[sic] is a mail leaving from N.Z. in a few days I thought a little year with you would not be out of place. I am writing this lying on my back in a camp hospital. I came in yesterday with Influenza. I was pretty crook, but am feeling pretty good again. I will be going out again tomorrow. I think They put you in hear to see how you go, if you get any worse you are sent to one of the numerous large hospitals. This is a marque[?] and holds about a dozen bunks. I tell you it is alright after sleeping on hard boards & sand & 13 to a tent. For this last 3 day & nights it has been raining without a break & still going strong. It is bad luck for the Allies because. it is holding up their advance. We are still waiting word to up to the front we have finished our training about a week now. Some of the companys that came over with us are way up about 2 weeks ago

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I have met Tommy Fisher here, he has had shell shock, but is on his way back to the front again. he is like all returned boys not keen to get there. I also met Bill Dickson here last Sunday he had just come over from Sling [word crossed out] he had met Jack in Sling & he said he was looking well. & expected to be over here in the next draft. A corporal has just come into the hospital who has won the V. C. he got a great cheer outside. he killed about 14 Germans by himself. I think I will have a try for it when I get up. I sent you are photo I got

taken in London. I hope you get it alright. I could only afford to get 3 taken. I have been very short of money. 1/- a day is too little for a chap to live on here. but one I have a good mate in Vic. since we came here we are on field Pay & that is less than 1/- a day. of course we get a issue of cigarettes (3) Pkts a week that's a good lift for a smoker like me. & then I get Vic share as well. The Dr has just been round I go out tomorrow. [words crossed out - I am please]

Aug 4 Sat morn

Dear Jess I was interrupted last night by Vic coming into see me & we started a game of 500. you will think I am pretty cool knocking of writing to you & playing 500 but it was just to make the number don't think I am forgetting you, because I am not. I dreamt and thought more about you last night than ever I did before. I think I would give the world to have our honeymoon over again.

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(3)

(2) [crossed out]

I was discharged from the hospital this morning. feeling alright. it was a good place be in very well treated plenty to eat & do what you like (nearly).

Dear Mate O'Mine. about Billys name you can call him whatever you like. I will leave that to you whatever name you like best yourself I know you will pick a good one. You picked a good man so I have no doubt you will pick a good name. how about putting the name Coutts in. I think it would be alright. I would like it. but again I will leave it to you. The main point is that everything goes alright before the naming comes off. Once I get that cablegram, I will say. (Set.)[? word underlined] You will be getting quite a stout lady now, if everything has went on as you have expected and I hope they have. Do you think I would forget what was going to happen in Nov (not on your life) I count the days. I just heard this morning that the 25ths were coming over in a day or two so I might see Frank. Jack will most likely come over with them. Now sweetheart I will have to get this posted I hope everything is going well you

& that you don't have to visit Dr Moody before Nov.

I will say goodbye with heaps of love
from your old man Alec

Don't forget to write plenty [words underlined] (Hurrah Mickey)

31 August 1917

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This is the letter marked with the letter "B" produced to Jessie Mee at the time of her swearing her Affidavit before me this 17th day of September 1918 – F S Brent – A Solicitor of the Supreme Court of New Zealand

France Somewhere

Aug 31 1917

My Dear Jessie,

I think it is nearly a fortnight since I sent you a few lines, the reason is we have been shifting about from place to place we have been in about four different camps. You would have seen the account of the great Messines. battle where N.Z took a big part well we have been over a lot of that ground, & my work. it is great. it was great win, the Huns thought it never could be taken. We are winning all along the line & not before time either. I have seen the worst side of war, Chaps. I knew laid low. Vic & me have [word crossed out] escaped without scratch. though vic was in a very hot place, one time. I haven't seen Bill yet he is in the 4th Brigade we might be miles apart. though, George was. telling me, he had saw him. W Bonnin is in the same Coy, as I am in. I heard someone mention his name, & I asked him if he was the one. he is a very quiet chap. like Mrs Dunlop. I think, you never see him smile. I think he is like all the rest of NZs - completely fed up of the war. This is a few days latter

than I started this letter. it is Sunday we had for a wonder nothing to do today. it is quite. nice.

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(2)

Since we came to this part of France we have hardly a minute to ourselves when we have finished tea it takes you about two hours cleaning your gear, by then you feel like going to bed. which I am glad to say we have at present. The fourth Brigade. the one Bill B Palmer & H Dickson are coming passed our billets tonight sometime. I am going to keep a lookout for them. we are having very wet weather raining everyday. The ground is soaking. I don't know what it will be like in winter. Like all the rest of the places we have been in France the people here have very dirty habits. I have got 3 parcels from you lately. & everything was alright except cigarettes, you want to seal the tin, when you send the next. the Biscuits were first Class, didn't think I had such a good cook). Golden Eagle suits me alright. I think Vic & me enjoyed the coffee best of all. We have it for supper when we can score some hot [word crossed out] water, we just finished it last night. Everything you sent seemed to be just the thing. I like getting parcels we don't get much to eat sometimes 1 loaf aday for three & sometimes four men, 1 tin of jam for 6 men, a bit of bacon, you could put in your eye in the mornings, about 1 slice of Bread for Dinner & Stew for tea made of Bully beef.

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I have been sick last week, for a couple of day. just a bit out of sorts. feeling fine again The lice are pretty plentiful here, any minute we have on a warm day we have a silent raid. there about as big as dogs lice, & you can't kill them, with any powder

I hope this finds you in good health & looking after yourself. I am glad you mother stopped you from going up to McColls [word crossed out]. I didn't think you would be so silly as want to go. [words underlined] Hows that for a blast 'eh'. You must be some fat if you are as big as Mrs Norman, would like to see you, I got your last letter dated July 1st. awhile ago. I was pleased to hear everything was going well, I expect another this week we get NZ Mail every fortnight. Send, as much nice things as you like but nothing heavy as our packs are too

heavy already, when you have to walk 20 miles a day. I hope this finds you very well & in good spirits. & I know you are loving me as much as ever. I would like to be with you for the next four months (especially) but no such luck. I will be there in spirit. Goodnight sweetheart
heaps of love from your ever true husband Alec.

I hope John got off again, in August. The chocolates were lovely. send some more. I can five on the money & get. Goodnight love Alec.

4th Brigade has just passed but only Canterbury Otago went some other way. Don't be like me write often.

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This is all I can get, so carry on with the good work Alec.

11 September 1917

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D

This is the letter marked with the letter "D" produced to Jessie Mee at the time of her swearing her Affidavit before me this 17th day of September 1918 – F S Brent – A Solicitor of the Supreme Court of New Zealand

Somewhere in France

Sept 11 1917

I hope this is alright[sic] Censor, I don't want to break the law.

My Dear Jessie

Today we have had inspection by the Brigadier General. & after it was over he gave us the afternoon off. so we must be winning. when I thing [sic] like this happens. I thought the best

way to put the time was having a yarn to my mate in good old NZ. Well to begin with. I am in good health & I hope this finds you the same. we are not fighting at present but we are drilling hard the same sickeng[sic] thing every day. Of course we are quite safe here, & thats a big thing. We have not been in the fighting line but have been in the trenches at night doing fatigue. & have seen some of my mates wounded. & a few killed, it is as dangerous work as holding the front line sometimes worse. everythings[sic] look lovely at night when the flares are sent up. it makes things as bright as day. Since I started this letter the N.Z. mail has come in, 3 from you two from Anna & one from Sophia dated July 8-12. I was very glad to get them – hear that you were all doing well. I was 1 of about 3 that only got mail in our platoon. We don't get all the mail the first night.

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(2)

And so the Postmistress has fallen in at last. I don't think anybody would be surprised. I would think somebody would be shaking in his shoe's. Mulrooney would be away in Trentham before that time; thats what all the indegestion[sic] was. I reckon her mother & father would know, at least a lot of the boys guessed, all I can say it is a pity another girl ruined. I would like to see it sent home to the right one, dirty scoundrel.

Fancy you spending £12 [or £2?] you must have been lashing out, you didn't tell me what you spent it on like in a letter you wrote me before the only thing you missed out was the tram fare that what it's for you know Mrs A Mee.

I am in bed writing now & Victor is sewing buttons on his trousers & cursing his luck that we as not in the second division all the boys swear they will be in the second divison. All the boys swear they will be in the second Division for the next war, I will have a good start won't I [missus]. Vic, & me still are together we are very lucky our names both starting with Ms. Victor had a close go one night. he & about half a dozen others were in a trench together when a shell came over & didn't go off but struck the chap next to Victor & wounded him pretty bad if it had of went off the chances are 100 to1 that the whole lot would have been blown to pieces, I will knock off for the night & write some more another time.

Good night

Sweetheart

X X X

Alec

14 September 1917

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C

This is the letter marked with the letter "C" produced to Jessie Mee at the time of her swearing her Affidavit before me this 17th day of September 1918 – F S Brent – A Solicitor of the Supreme Court of New Zealand

Friday evening

Sept 14th 1917

Dear Mate. O'Mine

You will see I have been some days in starting again – we have been going early & late this last few days. On Wed night. it was. Vic & I turn to go up to the canteen for biscuits when we got back about 9 oclock our boys were all shifted from the old billets to tents. one chap had got measles we had to set too & shift our staff in the dark.

Yesterday we were taken for a motor ride to the seaside, 30 motor lorries altogether we did not enjoy ourselves much standing up in the motors for about 4 hours we had about 2 hrs there but was a cold sort of a day & you could not get much to eat we arrived home about 7 oclock. by the time we finished tea it was dark. Then we had to clean all our brass on Web

gear, which took us till lights out: [word crossed out] then orders came round breakfast at 5 o'clock for this was to be a big day Sir Douglas Haig was to review the troops. We arose about 5 o'clock, & marched off at 6 we had to go a few miles. to the grounds. all the N.Z. troops were there except Rifle Brigade. Sir Douglas rode around us first then, we all marched past him when our platoon went past. (I was [?] from the end) he said very good, he told our Capt. our Company was very good if not the best. he is a fine looking fellow.

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(4)

We arrived home again about 1.30. & got the afternoon off. the first thing I done was to have a silent raid (lice) I didn't get many. Then, I had a sleep, (I still like a sleep in the afternoons) when I awoke. I started my yarn to you again. A little later the mail came, that all we look forward to here, is our bed & mails, & a feed, you should see the rush for the mail & if anyone gets a paper there is about a dozen around it. The Otago Witness gets a great, I seen one this afternoon where & in was were H & D Baseter were arrested, they have had a good spin. I can't make why they were not caught before.

You might not get a letter from me again for a while, as I don't know how long we are stopping here. & the next place we might not be able to write so handy, of course we might leave here for weeks, or we go in a hours notice (compre).

Dear sweetheart, if you don't get another letter from me before, the stranger arrives, you do what you think is best, go to a home if you can't get some one good. don't for a minute leave the work for your mother, she will have quite enough worry. don't save money on it. You want to keep back plenty, beforehand. Now this is all this time, see & look after yourself & keep fit.

I am still loving you & longing to be with you but by the way Russia is going on I think it will be a while yet. write plenty & cheer up. We get awfully lonely sometimes & long for dear old N.Z. Goodnight love heaps of kisses from your loving husband Alec. Remember me to your mother all old friends Alec.

23 September 1917

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E

This is the letter marked with the letter "E" produced to Jessie Mee at the time of her swearing her Affidavit before me this 17th day of September 1918 – F S Brent – A Solicitor of the Supreme Court of New Zealand

Sept 23 1917

Reply to 14 Company 2 Bat. 2 Regt.

Stationed at Seninghem [near Pas-de-Calais, France]

Still in Billets

My Dear, Wife

When you come to this part of my letter you will see I did not get the rest away, as I thought. I had the letter all right, & the next morning I was mess orderlie, & in the rush, I forgot to give it too him. However, there is another lad going tomorrow, so I will try again, you get ten days leave when you are here 12 months. it will be awhile before, I get away. I dont think any of us NZealanders will be here when my time comes, they are shaking up the Germans, now we have the best of it alround[sic]. Fritz is getting full up of it. & note before time.

In my last letter, I was saying I might be away from here but we have not shifted yet they say we are going this week onto the front line up Ypres way. a pretty lively place, I think. The Church Bells are ringing for afternoon service. the Frenchies are great at attending their churches. They have little places anywhere over the country where they worship.

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(2)

The 4th Brigade are away about 9 miles from us I would like to go see them but the distance is too much, for me. I would like to see them because the most of the boys I know well are in it. I have not dug out A McIntosh, R Westwood or W Walker I know where most of the other boys are, I just found out today there is chap called J Ramsay a brother of Mollys husband in our platoon. Geo & Sandy Mulligan rode over to see me last Sunday. they are looking well, Sandy especially. He is a Warrant Officer wears [unreadable] uniform he had just come back from leave in Ireland, had a great time among the Mulligans. he told me there was one very like me. We had Bible Class this afternoon, followed by tea in the Y.M.C.A. every Sunday evening the Y.M.C.A, give a tea to the Bible Class. boys or (Men of Goodwill) After the class, we had a sing song it was alright. it made me think of choir practice, only one thing missing the girls voices & especially [words underlined] that nice looking girl who used to sit in the second seat the one [words underlined] Archie Irvine took the fancy too, what a chance he had. I mind now he used to come to the store to tell his troubles. Dear Jessie, I would give a lot to be near that store again, wouldn't we have a time. We would go for a row on the river & walk on the beach & finish with supper & a smoodge on the couch X X I think I will go home Sweetheart. I don't know & believe I will have a smoke & warm [underlined] my feet, X X 'eh'

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NZ[?]

(3)

I have been at church & am now in the tent in bed, where I soon will have to draw this to a finish.[letter crossed out]

By the time you get this sweetheart it will be very near Dec. th 5 + I hope & will pray that everything will go alright with you. I would do anything to be with you & I know you have a brave heart, that will carry you through. I hope I will be there in time for the christening, I will have to go love lights out has went

Now, Goodnight love. my heart is ever with you. & I ask God to look after you till I return

Yours loving & true

husband Alec

X X X X X

4 October 1917

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F

This is the letter marked with the letter "F" produced to Jessie Mee at the time of her swearing her Affidavit before me this 17th day of September 1918 – F S Brent – A Solicitor of the Supreme Court of New Zealand

Belgium Military Camp

Oct 4th 1917

My Dearest Jess

We have just been in the line for a few days having a look at the Huns & it is a very lively place. [unreadable] while[sic] our Company were not actual in the front line [word crossed out] but we were even in a worse place, we are doing well now & I think we are winning if I could only tell you everything. You can hear our guns. sounding along Fritz his Iron Rations) for tea – that's what we like, to hear, I wrote to Anna last night, & I was telling her I might not get a letter away to you, as we did not know what minute we might shift but so far we have not moved. The rest of the N.Zs have done that well that we are not wanted yet. There is thousands of Fritzs passing here today (prisoners) the first I have seen, some of them are

boys about 16, some are laughing. & some look sad, especially officers. I believe we a have big haul this time I hope so it will always help to finish the rotten war

6 October 1917

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(2)

Somewhere in France

Oct 6 1917

Dear Jessie

Since I started the last letter we have shifted, & we shift again back to the front line tomorrow morning it is nothing but shifting you get fed up on it. if we get through [word crossed out] this. we should be having a spell for a while. The weather this last few days has been very cold & wintry. it is looking better this afternoon. Vic & I are still together we are in the same section, that means we are together on the field we have just had some Condensed Milk together all our company got parcels from N.Z. a few days ago with addresses on them saying to write mine was from the Dunedin P.C. signed by Miss Burt I will write to her when I get the chance. Now don't get jealous. Jessie. poor old Francis Joseph. I suppose she is brokenhearted. enough sed [sic]. I got your Cake sent from [Brows?] alright. I dealed it around the tent & left myself hardly any. of course I get some of the other chaps when, they get a parcel. I still have my scarfe [sic]. I will stick to it till the very last. [unreadable] mind you were knitting it at Evans Flat when I was up one time

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(3)

I am getting short of paper you will see by this sheet, we have not struck a Y.M. for a while. I often think about you now & dream about you when sitting in the dugout. I think about going to the yards on Tues night & stopping at your place & having a big smooze with you

then coming back again on Wed night never passing with stopping what great time we had then Jessie dear, let us hope we will soon be together again. Of course I wont be able to stop at Brighton on the way home from the yards there will be somebody waiting for me at a. Bivy in the reserve but you will have a little cobber to keep you company when I am away sweetheart. Now dearest. I have just counted up the days till Dec. I don't think you will get another letter from me before Dec. Oh Jessie you don't know how I wish I was there. I hope they will help you as much as they can at home. I know you have a lot to bear for a few days, but I know your[sic] the bravest of the brave. May God Bless You & Keep you through this till I come

Now Jesse I will say Goodnight. Remember me to all our old friends and your Mother Will close with best love & hundreds of kisses for yourself

I am your loving husband Alec

X X X

Good Luck