

With the 259th Bn. Can. Rifles,
VLADIVOSTOK, Siberia, 13th May, /19.

DEAR SIS:-

Just a few spare moments, to tell you, that we are quite busy packing up. Yes, even a soldier can be busy packing up, although he has only a limited amount of luggage; (two kit bags, and sometimes an additional haversack). I was busy yesterday afternoon, painting a sign on my kit bags, consisting of name, address, unit, regimental number, etc. It looks just like one of the posters, back home. The big trouble we all experience, is to get all our belongings back to Canada, in the space they allow us, for luggage.

I was quite fortunate, to be able to make another trip through the hills on Sunday afternoon. Of course, as usual, my car was in the garage for repairs, and we were quite unable to call on the inevitable "Droskey", so we proceeded on foot, via. the "hike route." Although, we didn't encounter any more hedge-hogs or lizards this time, we had the extreme pleasure of meeting a snake, about fifteen or eighteen inches long, with a body nearly as large round as my wrist. It was the largest snake I ever saw, outside of a circus or show.

We thoroughly explored four fishing villages, and again found, the non-observance of the Lord's Day, in evidence. The natives, "carried on" as usual. A characteristic of these villages is, that the inhabitants, are mostly Manchurians.

For supper, we build a fire between two rocks, along the shore of the bay, and enjoyed, preparing it immensely. We supped on boiled eggs, canned sardines, toast, coffee, and canned fruits. We also had crabs, which we found under the rocks, but as to the method of preparing

them, I cannot give an explanation, as I do not know the term; suffice it to say, that it was quite a primitive one, but despite all, the "finished crab" was quite delicious, indeed.

In returning to camp, we were very fortunate to witness, a method of fishing, that I have never seen before. The Manchurians, were fishing with large nets, which resembled butterfly nets, in nearly every respect, except size. The method of catching the fish, was nearly the same as catching butterflies, with the exception, that it was done in the water, instead of the air. The fishers, waited along the shore, and as the waves came in on the tide, they would watch for the fish to be washed in, whenever they detected some, down came the net, in the same manner as a butterfly net, and the result was a half dozen or dozen fish, about ten inches long, shaped somewhat like the suckers back home, all but the mouth, found themselves prisoners in the net. The net in turn was emptied into a large basket, and from the contents of the baskets, I should judge, the method, a profitable one, indeed. Of course, it was a kind of a waiting game, but one catch, made up for the time spent.

We arrived at Camp, quite weary and footsore, about 8.30 p.m. Of course, I had my camera along, and succeeded in taking some very interesting pictures, of the natives at work.

Getting down to the present, we expect to leave here, which means embark either on Sunday or Monday. So this will probably be my last letter from Siberia. and I may possibly beat it back, as the "Empress of Russia" is reputed to be the fastest ship on the Pacific


It is understood, that we shall dock at Vancouver, and probably leave almost immediately for our Military Districts. I shall therefore go to Military District No 1, which is London, and return to Kitchener, from London. I shall send a telegram from London, to let you know, what train I shall arrive on.

I am looking forward to the return trip through the rockies, as I expect we shall return via. the C.P.R. In coming, we used the C.N.R.

I am sorry that we shall not dock at Victoria, in a way, as I have quite a few friends and acquaintances, who I should like to see again, before going east. But I do not think it likely, that our stay at Vancouver, will be long enough, to allow us the time to run over to Victoria.

Best wishes to all.

Still battling
(with my superiors)



Interesting Letter From Siberia

(Received by Mr. and Mrs. John Gies).

With the 259th Bn. Can. Rifles
Battalion Orderly Room, Somewhere
in Siberia.

Feb. 21th., 1919.

Dear Parents:—

Everything going fine, and how are you all? We are having a fine time, don't mind the cold a bit, Sunshine every day, and moon and stars at night; in fact I did not see a real snow-storm since last winter. We are having ideal weather here, of course the cold is quite intense at times, but not damp like in Canada. We are outfitted like a regular bunch of Eskimos. We have fur caps, sheepskin coats, shoe-packs (large) goggles, heavy sweaters, mitts, parkas, moccasins, woollen scarfs, mackinaws and the same as we had in Canada, and other articles. When we get up in the morning and start to collect our belongings, it reminds me of a second hand store.

Five or six of us were out on a little exploring hike, we saw many interesting sights. It seems the Russians are good contractors and builders, as their construction seems to be well planned, and made of solid brick, very durable. There is a great amount of suffering and hardships prevalent among the Russians. Vladivostock seem to be a kind of refuge station for homeless people. From away up the line, there are hundreds of people who have no place to stay over night, other than at the Station, at Vladivostock; I don't know where they eat, and quite a few people who seem to live around the place we are stationed, come around to collect the leavings of our meal, especially the bread.

We have settled down quite comfortable now, the Catholic Army Huts and Y.M.C.A. are doing their utmost. The C.A. Huts are doing great work to supply us with smokes and other comforts, which come in very handy. Then we can purchase any little necessities and even luxuries at the canteen altogether. I must say, we have all that heart can desire. Some entertainments every evening at the Y.M.C.A. We had a Czecha-Slovak musical entertainment, which was rendered by the people of the author. They played "Humoursquie" and other similar productions in a manner that I have never heard equalled before.

Of course the thing we all miss most, is the social life back home, but with our comradeship and social chats among the boys a fellow doesn't get much time to worry. There so many incidents that arise in daily routine, which furnishes the healthiest talk of all. Some times its at one or the other fellow's expense, and we all have a good laugh but it helps to consolidate and strengthen the spirit of good fellowship, it is such little incidents that bring us more closely together in our common course. The way things look to me, as if we will be back home very soon, perhaps in time to help to plant the "Peace Garden". I expect to be with you all again before spring is over."

From your, Loving Son
Spr. Julius Gies