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Dear Glen,

Having been called on yesterday by the Free French Commandant here, Col Marchand, & having to give him some food, Joe opened your cake, which we brought down from Libya and it filled the bill splendidly, receiving many handsome compliments. There was a charming little note from May, which made me very homesick in fact - generally a good case for writing to you, especially as I must owe you for several letters now.

I am now established as Commandant of all troops in the Aleppo area, mainly my own Bde group, with French, Syrian & British additions and a very interesting job it is. My HQ. are in the City but we have several hundred miles of frontier and the troops are all over the place, with reserves and mobile columns here & there. Our present job is frontier control, showing the flag, keeping order & supervising arms traffic, supervising mill of flour, training & reconnaissance. There is enough to keep me thoroughly busy with

plenty of variety. This morning I have been in the office and apart from routine work have given orders for surrounding & searching a village, pursued & confined some court martial papers, interviewed a DAPAS, several Intelligence & Special Services officers, had a talk with a Secret Service Agent, examined very carefully a road reconnaissance report & delivered a stiff reprimand to two young officers sent in by their P.O. for the purpose. This afternoon the Governor of Aleppo is returning my official call, we will have a very smart guard, the Brigade Band to play a General Salute & I will entertain him to coffee & cigarettes while the Band plays upstairs downstairs. Very good fun really, if one could only slip home occasionally.

Aleppo is a typical Eastern city, partly modernised with buses & pictures and one good every expensive hotel & with perhaps 20% of the population in Western dress. But it is far more Eastern than the cities of Egypt or Palestine. The dominating feature is the great ancient citadel with its towers, mounted on a huge artificial mound of Hittite days & looms over the whole city. But you must look in the tourist's books for descriptions.

The troops are in very good fettle. They like it better than the Westerns do, but have been soldiers long enough for one place to be much like another to them. We have

so many employed on guards & pickets that it isn't easy to get in much training, but for that matter they are pretty well trained already and a spot of "real soldiering" is not doing any harm. We worried about the Japs for a bit but have decided it's no use and ^{that} you people can be depended upon to keep your end up.

I should like to see N.Z. in its present-maintained condition. I hope you are getting the equipment, especially light automatics & mortars & anti tank guns. In N.Z. tanks would do poorly against properly equipped infantry.

It is impossible to imagine finer troops than we have here at present, nearly all are battle experienced & the long intervals between battles, spent under almost service conditions, have given time for training & to about lessons. Moral is as high as ever & general efficiency, both of staffs & units, very high indeed. The General makes no secret of his opinion "the best troops in the world" & we certainly have no reason to be afraid of any others. We would like a chance to talk with the Japs, especially in reasonably open country, the jungle would no doubt bother us at first.

Our advanced base is now near Tel Aviv. I called in there on the way up & found fresh information the new Soviet efficient captured

Old feels has ~~settled~~ well from the start and I regret not having put him up for a commission earlier.

I am enjoying commanding a Brigade, really a Brigade Group of all arms these days and do feel quite up to the job. It was a wrench leaving the 20th, but there wasn't much of it left and the time was opportune. Jim Bunnors is commanding it very well, at the moment he is the only one of the original 41 officers still with it & there are about 100 of the original men. The Ken Cammells in Greece Cret & Libya were 982 plus 224 paratroops, 23 in Cret. We also lost our 1st reinforcement, left at the Base, with Archie MacDuff in Greece.

It was bad luck poor Quaker being captured so soon. How he'd have done I really don't know, he was so fearfully touchy and temperamental, with all his good points. His disappearance rained us some worries perhaps, but he was going well at the end and I thought he'd have been alright if he'd come into the field with us. Blountwell has not had a very good spin. He is another difficult character and quite early he upset & annoyed a great many people by his incredible rudeness. He was given good opportunities but missed them and for a long time now has been on a side track C. job with the British Army in

The final award promotion has passed him by. Lately I have been able to arrange for him to get another chance and he is being extracted from Middle East & getting command of a Field Maintenance Center in the Mexican Desert. I'm afraid he has small chance of ever getting back to the Division but he may get a promotion in this way.

I am very glad you are getting a decent job in the Home Guard, very few can deserve some recognition as well. I should imagine that Poon is a letter perfect but maddening adjutant & should think Appleby would be short of confidence for a Ben command. They are all doubters doing a good job but I shudder to think of old Poon as adjutant. I hope the enemy know no more about the Army in N.Z. than we do, even the General has hardly any idea.

I've spent this afternoon largely socially - receiving the visit of the Gunnison. Our wives would have laughed to see us. We had the lounge all anxiously tidied & dusted, Bob Hawson produced a table cover, the cook's Turkish coffee was carefully tasted, we swept up & dusted chairs & got all ready so zealously. Then the Gunnison drove up, we had everything worked out, grand of the presented arms, Band played General's Salute, to which he wasn't entitled, Bob met him at the door escorted him upstairs where I

met him & we drank coffee & talked nothing
through an intermission for half an hour. There
was no question of being awed by him, & actually
I plan to be very rough with him in certain
eventualities, but we are anxious to please if
possible.

When he had gone I called on
the full French delegate & drank more coffee @ then
attended a conference at which plans for putting
people in bags were discussed. Tomorrow I'm
going on a two day tour of part of my area @
at the week end hope to attend the Great-neces at
Wick by Son, some 200 miles to the East on the Equator.

I've just approved the plans for
surrounding & surrounding this village - 100 in/ and
a patrol of caravans - great fun @ everyone hoping
it will be a success.

All the children must be growing
past recognition. Ruth speaks of finally jumping
up the can type - I just can't picture it.

I am really flattered that Gwyneth &
Owen were pleased to be remembered - also to
get authentic information as to the name of your
youngest son. I hope poor old David is shaping
well, I always thought you were both marmalows
with him. It is good to hear of you
seeing my nice wife every now & then @ of the
children playing together.

With kindest regards to you both,

Howard