



ROYAL DE LUXE NANTES

Liverpool
July 2014

Letter n°5

Diary

15th November 1916

I, John McCulloch, having been posted at the front for 12 months and newly appointed Lieutenant in the Kings Regiment, have just obtained my first leave: Liverpool bound.

During the journey back to my homeland, thousands of visions hammer at my mind.

So many Pals have vanished around me, as if blown away by a breeze from the sky, leaving, in their place, a pile of mud without human flesh. It disappears into the air like a sneeze, leaving a taste of hell in the mouth.

As I exit Liverpool Lime Street station, the sound of shells still ringing, I make out an infinite number of women

holding the battles aloft from behind the scenes. Proud, fearless and brave, they hold the miracle of victory inside them in the midst of pain.

In battle, a few of our Pals companions taught us not to become too attached, because tomorrow maybe, the pain of their disappearance will have to be erased in order to forget.

This necessary distance prevents me bearing witness with the handful of friends I meet on the platform.

It seems like I see their smiles in slow motion, and their arms around my shoulders become shrouds of useless pride, whilst I remember mine wrapped around my war companions, bodies stretched out and swallowed up into the mud.

How can I speak? What should I say?

As emotion shakes me, I look at the city through a cloud of gas and cannot make out the streets, buildings or avenues.

I am taken to a pub and asked a million questions.

I put on a brave face, eyes averted.

I am going back in a week!

At the other end of the bar I spot a fellow Pals. He is alone, looking into his beer without daring to look at me. I can see instantly that instead of the foam on top of the beer, he sees the surges of water blown into the air by cannon fire.

I don't know what came over me then, but I felt the need to escape this purgatory and went outside onto the pavement.
It was raining.

And that was when I spotted my grandfather.

He was sitting on a stone, his umbrella pointing up to the sky like a lightning rod. His bald head was still shining. Like a sun made of migratory birds.

"Grandfather, I thought I was seeing you tomorrow..."

"I know my boy..."

Again, a miracle more unexpected than I could have imagined was floating in the sky.

Having lit his pipe, he took the time to close his umbrella.

In that second, as water was dripping everywhere, a transparent shield appeared just above us. The rain fell without touching us and trickled into puddles around us.

The smell of tobacco enveloped me like it did in the Heysham house.

"Come and sit here!"

I parked my bum on the stairs. "You are a real Pals and so much more. Lift your sleeve and you will see that your beauty spots have disappeared.

"But grandfather, that's because the shelling removed the skin there."

"Ok," he said.

“I have looked into the universe so much that I have crossed the Planck Wall...
I received this letter written by a grandmother”
And here is what he read to me:

I, Grandmother from behind the Planck Wall 14 billion light years away!

I have observed your relentlessness and the feats you have achieved defending the causes that with time and death have lost all meaning.

Dear soldier, you are like a lightning bolt that flashes love for Liverpool and its people.

This war will end in pain for all, lost in a desert of mud.

This desert, built and beaten by people obsessed with power and money, is oblivious to the giant water lilies of the simple and gentle common people.

A piece of advice: be ready for the next war

Fields of water lilies do not grow in the desert!

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