

Feb. 14 1917

My dearest, I haven't yet received a letter from you & feel quite distressed - no news now since the 2nd I think. A number were posted instead of being sent or here by orderly & as they were not addressed properly I've little hope of seeing them again. However I ought to receive some tomorrow morning before leaving here to make another liaison.

I have been very happy with these people - they are very agreeable & intelligent - sérieux I suppose the French would call them & I like that - especially Bonneau. The next lot don't attract me. However they live in a very nice place - a big chalk quarry; it was beautifully sunny when I went to see them there this afternoon & I thought their little village of dugouts, some perched on a ledge against a cliff others against a buttress below & all connected by a number of fine staircases - the next best thing to the Group's terrace looking over the river. I don't expect to be there long, afterwards I shall probably be with General Perkins - III Corps H.A. You had better address my letters there until I give you another address.

This stunt has been a success from the personal

point of view & not much use otherwise. I sent in
a report after seeing the Aviation; I was quite
pleased with it - considering I only had twenty minutes
there & it was necessary to see a great deal &
at the same time absorb all the details of a
complicated organisation. The General & Colonel
both say me up to thank me for it - the latter
saying that it was going on to the Corps & I should
'probably get a D.S.O. or something' which I take
it was a manner of speech. I've really taken
a lot of trouble here to find out about French
Artillery; I know far more about it ^{now} from a general
point of view than about our own. To understand
~~about~~ an organisation so nicely adjusted as theirs
gives me a very considerable pleasure.

Feb 15. I didn't get on with this last night. First
I played chess with Ingh Capitanie & afterwards
dined with some anti-aircraft people nearby -
more particularly with one Fowler, a very nice
Wykehamist who was in College with me;
he is a very good mathematician, Fellow of
Trinity - all that - his job now is anti-aircraft
instruments, he is making a sort of tower of
inspection along the front; it must be very

amusing. It was a joy evening altogether.
Fowler has one of the most splendid heads I
have ever seen set on a huge frame - quite
strikingly like R.L.S. in his photos.

I was still in bed at 8:15 when a Frenchman
appeared at my door - said he had come to
take my baggage. Stupid to come so early, but I had
it ready - less than 40 mins & now it's all
gone. It is a most lovely morning & the crows
have arrived in the wood opposite. I love crows.
They give me a reassuring feeling about life. How
I wish that all this were happening to me
about six weeks later. Near where I am
going there is a big orchard within an old stone
wall & a great chateau half in ruins; it
would be a lovely spot in spring. There are quite
a lot of small birds in France since the war
put an end to the shooting of them.

Dearest one, I do hate being without news of you
- especially when I know that you are in trouble.
I had a horrible vision of you last night with
your head in my lap crying, and I have been
feeling as though you were trying to reach me.

I must have a letter this morning } the
despatch rider.

I have time to make one or two extracts from
my note book: -

66

Feb 15. How often when people are pleased with what
B they have done are they thinking of what someone
else has not done?

9

Since coming to France I have regarded inefficiency
in my own person as the unforgivable sin - I
have actually on one or two occasions experienced
a sense of sin almost new to me in its intensity.
To-day I have experienced a feeling hardly less
intense with regard to others. For the army of
France, suffering, experimenting, learning organizing,
the war has been one long continuous effort of
will - intellect - Now it is braced to a state of
fine efficiency beyond what the British Staff
has been able to imagine; - it is brassy with
hope like chestnut bud in April. Patient
accuracy, clear thought, science, - everything
has been built on there; and above all the 'System'
D. And yet in this army I met to-day a corner
of dingy mudstone showing no more intelligence
than one might expect to find in the office of
a provincial solicitor.

[The system D means - one word, initiative
in overcoming difficulties; - ingenious improvisation
This is a paper of some French artillerymen who
clearly were unequal to their job through sheer
bluntness]

10 Schoolmasters want treaty with a great
strong wind.

I want to write something today; I will write
to you first if I can copy it into my notebook.

[Interruption at this point while I take sound-
imitating policeman & explain to him the facts
concerning the theft of two overcoats! Then
home]

"Life like the Arts needs a motif & the subordination
of parts; a life which is not ruled by an image
~~which makes itself~~ felt in all its phases is like
a painting without design. If you examine your
state of mind ~~in~~ in moments of apparently casual
unhappiness you will probably find that one of two
things is the matter; - either your state of being can-
not be recognised in the image you have formed or
~~that~~ a subordinate part has seized the whole;

or it may rather be that your whole operational machine is out of order - goes stumbling along instead of running sweetly & well. But that machine requires care; it must not be racing at one moment & seizing up the next; if it runs fast it must still be controlled by a strong central action; and that strength is the Mind; it is Thought; it is the Image.

[Finished in bed //

Goodbye dearest Ruth. I had no letter this morning - the orderly didn't come. He is to come to-morrow.

Over your loving

George

