

My dearest Ruth

Dug Out Aug. 29. 1916

You will have had no letter these last two days - I hope you will still have been enjoying the view of me in the Rest Camp. I hope you won't condemn me for hiding the little fact that I was actually sitting on my baggage, as I wrote to you, packed to come back to the battery in the afternoon.

I confess that the world of war has presented itself as somewhat dismal. I was feeling unwell yesterday with a return of pain in my back & was in attendance at the Map Room. The other half battery has exchanged with us & their place here filled by strangers. It seems a very tiresome arrangement - not that I have any personal feeling; their O.C. Captain Sayers seems a quite exceptionally nice man, but the work is muddled. Once again you may see!!

We're having very upset weather here - a violent thunderstorm this afternoon. Torrential rain is very hard to keep out of our holes. Mine, partly because the entrance faced the storm got plenty - about half the floor <sup>was</sup> a puddle & is in a great mess still & very damp. The trouble

might all have been avoided by a soakage pit at  
the entrance - I gave such careful instructions  
as to how it was to be done & then some fool while  
I was away (this was long ago when the place  
was being dug) thought he knew better & messed  
the job, & in the end I went away without having  
it done. Well its done now - I rather enjoyed  
doing it - the digging first of a considerable  
hole in my floor at the bottom of the stairs &  
then a trench to the middle of the puddle - a  
very good drainage scheme. I made some improve-  
ments for carrying the water bottles off the  
roof. I am lying in bed now, but was inter-  
rupted in writing this by the sound of violent  
rain & an ominous trickle - so I donned my  
muckintosh & gum boots & mounted my stairs  
to see lamp in hand (a little oil lamp I pur-  
chased in Corbie a few days ago) to see whether  
the water was intending to flow in the channel  
indicated or in this direction - after all  
I don't want my soakage pit full; I'd  
rather have a dry floor - the matter seemed

rather dubious so I schooled the young stream  
a little with a pointed stick ; I also leant  
a sheet of corrugated iron against the entrance  
to take the drive of the rain & am now  
satisfied that I shall keep dry enough.

It was my off day following the night in  
the map room - but not exactly an idleness.

I was busy attending to a new dug-out which  
is to serve as a den of pleasure for the sub-  
alterns - The mess room is too dark & plain  
altogether to serve (it ought to be a considerable  
convenience. But I had work going on in the  
mess too. The chinks in the ceiling through  
which voracious beasts were wont to push  
down earth & maggots have now been closed. It  
seems foolish to have used rough sawn boards  
for the roofing originally so that they mostly had  
no idea of fitting. Together all the way along the  
walls next. I have secured some Persian  
(green canvas of a good colour) to cover the  
walls withal. More about the mess another

time - I have begun to feel very sleepy - Good Night.

Aug 30. A wet wet day from the south-west. I've been pottering about the batteries looking after one job and another since 8 o a.m. It's now midday. I'm sitting in a rusty little hole where the telephonists do their work; one's head touches the roof almost which is covered with flies. Outside an occasional ammunition wagon drawn by three horses blots out the light as it passes along the track, now a swamp, & I can see the humps of earth covering numerous dugouts & a few figures moving slowly around in the rain. Beyond, the ground slopes gently up to the grey sky; it is green with short grass & thistles but not green enough & sadly cut up by trenches, gun emplacements & shell holes. A dreary scene altogether. And yet the wind & the rain have been rather homely & lovable than in themselves uncomfortable. I am feeling weller to-day than since I was visited by trench-fever or whatever it was.

What good news from Roumania. The Germans will feel very sick. The news from the interior of Germany has been better too just lately; if it's true that the troops are short of food the country must be pretty hard up.

I'm sorry I haven't gave last letters here or I would search them through to see what wants answering but I left them up in my dug-out, & I must finish

time. I have begun to feel very sleepy —  
~~Good Night.~~ This before I go up for lunch.

At present I can recollect nothing that requires discussion. I heard from Uncle Howes & from Aunt Jessie yesterday — they both wrote very kindly & sympathetically; but somehow such bad letters! I'm sorry — because I can't help believing them both capable of writing very good letters & I can only suppose that they don't know me well enough to write naturally. And yet I feel I could write quite a decent letter to either of them. Of course the great thing if one's letter is to be really interesting is to write about himself & that's what makes some people so much more difficult to write to than others.

I've written no more of my book — alas! I can see that the lonely times in my dug-out (lovely times I might almost call them) must be reserved partly for that — but it will be very difficult to get it going in this atmosphere.

Farewell, dearest Ruth — with great love  
to you from your loving George  
When shall I hear about Aldeburgh?