

April 3. 1917

My darling, I am distressed that you are
going short of letters. My last to you went
off a came back again & in the end must
have been delayed 2 days at this end. And
these are very busy days. We are preparing
the roads ourselves for our advance & that
means a lot of work. I have spent most
of to-day with a large party of men filling
up a crater & building a roadway - our
lossies weigh 9 to 10 tons when loaded up
& in soft ground the back wheels simply
dig themselves in & get hopelessly stuck, so
we have to make a good job of our road main-
tenance. Luckily the Hun in his sudden
destruction has left us plenty of material
& one can get along quite fast with wood
& bricks. I had a bad wetting
last evening. I went out to observe a
shoot; there was a gale of wind blowing
& it soon began to rain; it went through
my puttees & socks & into my boots in about
5 mins & the Signallers who foolishly had
coats were wet through to the skin by then.
After that we had a long job mending about

with wires & in the end the light was
too bad to observe even during a short
^{clear} interval. For a tame country I never
saw such a storm - sleet & every thing nasty.

April 4 I was writing this before dinner last
night & hoped to get it finished afterwards -
but what with discussion about this & that,
study of maps to get O.P. & so on I came to
bed without writing any more & it doesn't do
to cut one's sleep short when a sleepless time
may be coming any day. I was rather
bores last night by Litzow's ceaseless way of
carrying on the battery business; it goes
on without interruption all through dinner
calls on the telephone & all the rest; it's true
there's plenty to consider but I don't think
it's necessary to make our meals a pandemonium.
However, L. is very good at the job & I'm
always in agreement with his schemes &
feel very willing to work under him & very
happy to be having a strenuous life.
I think I told you that the right half are
under canvas now. We expected to have
our comfortable billets before this, but
the advance seems to be held up somewhat

at the moment. When we do go forward ²
it will be a life of tents & cellars - very
pleasant in warm weather, but disagreeable
in these conditions; this morning it is snow-
ing heavily & the snow also is lying. How
it manages to keep so cold with a south wind
I can't make out. Yesterday, as far as things
seen are concerned was a beautiful southern
day with bright sky & blobby white clouds
- but it was a bitterly cold wind. His nose
pretending that the weather isn't the most
important circumstance of this kind of life!

I sent off two parcels of books to you at
the same time as my last letter - it seems a
more sensible plan than throwing them away.
The Ages of Man is an amusing collection, but
I don't suppose the others will interest you
much as you haven't the good fortune to read
French. I will send back the New Europe as
far as I have read very soon. It is very well
done & full of interesting things. I am going
to order it to be sent to you & you can
send it on each fortnight - that will give
you a chance of reading it first if you like -
but please don't keep it back very long. I don't

often deal out here but sometimes when I
can quite a lot done. To-day, as there's
nothing doing I shall probably devote to
my letters - I'm greatly beholden.

I'm also sending a parcel containing
your letters, a pair of drawers, & the
oil silk cape. You'll see what's happened
to the drawers! My stupid owl of a servant
confesses that he was looking out of the
window as he was trying them at the
fire. I don't know whether they can be
patched; anyway I had better have the
other pair out now. The cape has been
a failure - chiefly because the hand-
holes are in a ridiculous place, but also
because I stupidly made the attempt to
get out of a car when wearing it: if it
can be mended I should like to have it
out again & it will be quite useful now
that I know its limitations for carrying
up to an O.P., in lieu of a coat, & standing
in the rain.

I'm glad to hear about Bob's leave - quite
freely & comfortably glad, though I can see

no reason why he should get it. The reason³
given to explain the fact that practically
no leave has been given this year is shortage
of transport. A great many men haven't been
home for twelve months & I shouldn't be sur-
prised if 20% of the whole army had been
out 9 months without leave. They ought all to
come before Bob on that head alone; & in
addition the fighting men ought clearly to
get leave before those with comfortable jobs at
the base. Of course railway transport is pro-
bably short as well as ships - but if we are
to have an effective army leave ought to be
arranged in spite of such difficulties.

Your letters lately have been much concern-
ed with Clare. I'm glad she can play so happily
by herself; I can quite understand the pleasure
you have in watching her - & only wish I could
share it with you. I should especially like to
see her with another infant; I rather she's a
friendly little soul. You've said nothing about
her walking except on one occasion. How is that
performance progressing? And has she begun to
talk yet? I suppose we must expect her disposition
to be taciturn, seeing that she has such reserved

parents! Perhaps she will talk to Barbara,
as Barbara is certain to talk to her.

I'm afraid I don't see I find it very difficult
to swallow all you say about Tanks. There
would be no point in carrying howitzers
& to take a big gun you would require a tank
about the size of Westbrooke or the shock
of discharge would knock it to pieces; more-
over 200 lbs of ammunition (you would have
have less) weigh 10 tons & the cartridges would
take a large space. It is perhaps just conceivable
but it doesn't sound at all sensible. Does
Mr Staples know anything about guns - or
does he mean a 6 pounder.

Two parcels arrived yesterday - many thanks.
The sausages are excellent as usual & so
are the dates. We shall try the cream to-night
& I will let you know about it.

I wonder how Bob & Mildred will like Ogwen
Cottage. It's not very comfortable. And in
Easter week it will be snowed. Moreover
Mildred is bad at hills isn't she? You know
Ogwen Lake is 1000 ft up to start with -
however I suppose they'll fish. I should
have thought it would suit them much