

Sunday June 11.

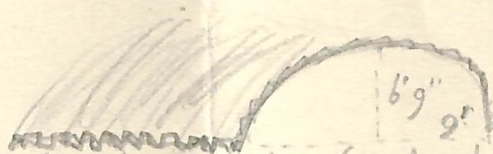
III Corps, B.E.F.

My own dearest, In the great mental strain of
 dating this letter - I am shocked to remember that
 you had a birthday was it yesterday or June 6?
 I can't remember. No present from me I'm afraid
 - but will you buy yourself a copy of Shakespeare's
 Sonnets, & that shall be a reminder of my love
 dearest as they talk of little else. The Temple edition
 is not too bad or Durdens's; but there are several
 others & I want you get the one you like best, & be
 as extravagant as you feel inclined. You might try
 Bumpus in Oxford Street who have both new &
 second hand books; but to me the best editions are
 out of print.

Well dear Ruth we reached our new battery position
 last evening - without our two guns which are
 still in the workshop. Five lorries winding along
 a road suddenly fetched up beside a high sloping
 bank of grass. Several men with sundry packing
 Cases & cooking utensils were there deposited to
 make a habitation for themselves during how many
 weeks or months I cannot tell. Kind forethought
 had provided a dump for our use a few round
 tents; these were pitched on the long wet grass on
 the sloping bank & the work of digging began.

Chatter once more & that means hard work; but as
time is short we have decided not to tunnel, & the R.E.
whose promises no wise man trusts have promised us
cupolas

very strong



made of iron &
; these with
6ft of stone & earth above the highest point & dug well
into the bank ought to make us fairly safe; & then
luckily a very narrow trench about 6ft deep has been dug
only 50 yds away to take a telephone wire & that's as safe a
place as one could well have short of tunnel 14 ft deep
which would take 6 weeks to make & involve elaborate
shoring.

Yesterday was very wet & it was a
cheerless operation encamping here; luckily however the
evening was fine more or less. Personally I got some
fun out of this sort of performance - a fun that fits
in with Chatter Brock's explosion of the absolute, for it
depends on the complete evaporation of all elements of
comfort. I went round the camp before the men
tunnel in last night & found myself quite merrily
ragging them about the opinions they had expressed
on leaving the last position; many of them were glad
to go because they expected that any other quarters
would be more pleasant ^{than these} - you see they're mostly town-
bred men with no experience of camp life - but those
expectations have not been fulfilled. They were quite
jolly about it & we came to the agreeable conclusion

that nothing matters very much so long as you are doing something - worth doing with people the right companions. Certainly they are a very friendly lot among themselves & treat us (the officers) in a friendly way too. I had a wretched night however. With too much faith in the clearing weather I elected to sleep in the open under shelter of a poplar tree; I ought to have been able to keep dry inside the waterproof bag, but the bed was on a slight slope sideways - somewhat I managed badly so that a trickle came in from the exposed part of the bed on the higher side & it was a hopeless case after that; a jet moving seemed too unpleasant an alternative. Moreover about midnight began a most vigorous strafing not far away & suddenly a field battery began firing over the top of us with a highly disturbing crackle. This didn't last very long but the noise of constant traffic on the road just below continued well into the hours of daylight; so that in all I was thankful to be up at 5.0 with the prospect of parade at 6.0.

We're no better off for water here than in our former position; the men say that the supply is three miles away & it is probably not less than two; but I haven't yet heard that it is poisonous even when boiled as the last supply was!

Littlewood, Bell & I are alone now so far as officers are concerned. I am glad of this; two of the 3 men of 41 half battery were serious losses. The rest

of our battery will join us later I think.
The war news these last days has been thrilling. I
have such high hopes of this Russian advance. A big
blow to Austria just now might mean anything. I
can't think that if she caved in the Prussians wd.
go on much longer - But then there's always against
peace the colossal advantage which modern govts
have in dealing with peoples; it's always ten to one
against rebels or rather a hundred to one & this applies
to Austria-Hungary as well as Germany. It is rumored
here that the German fleet has come out again &
been beaten; if only that could be true!
It is extraordinary how the officers promising with me
to take part in a big offensive; I feel we must do it
& when we do I want to be there - not for the
excitement but because I want to fight in this
cause.

I am still without letters - the
one real sub. And wish endlessly to talk with you
dear Ruth; writing is so little satisfaction, especially
when it has to be thrust in as it is here with the
mind half-occupied with the works here all the time.
Food will be difficult to get here. So please send a
thing or two - soups above all, as the canteens even when
they can be reached are badly supplied with them. Would
it be possible to send a ham? I believe 11 lbs is the
limit & not 7 lbs as I think you said. God bless

For my dear, this year I'm very much
to give close a firm from me. George