



OFFICERS' MESS,

Sept. 2. 1917 T LINES,

AVINGTON PARK CAMP,

WINCHESTER.

My dearest Ruth, I will start my letter to you before going out - perhaps I shall finish it this morning & stay in for lunch; at present I'm rather waiting for the weather.

I've been wishing there was some prospect of your coming here. You could be so happily ensconced in one of the lovely villages nearby & I could live with you - that apparently is done by some officers - I mean that they live out with their

wives. I didn't tell you that on Friday evening I walked to the top of a neighbouring hill - whence one of the loveliest views in England. We are quite near a place known to hydrochemists as Amphitheatre - that's actually what it is, an amphitheatre on an enormous scale. It is quite unspoilt by the proximity of the camps - a war retains in some way its remoteness so that one wouldn't expect to meet anyone there or very often actually

wouldn't. The top end is a good sized lawn; & from there you can see right down the Stechen valley to the Isle of Wight & down a subsidiary valley to Winton; one also looks over a big stretch of country northward to the King's close downs. You may imagine how all this combed me for the shock of finding myself in a military camp. I'm afraid the beginnings in such a place as this are extremely unpleasant to me. The English address is so overwhelming. Dinner the first night was the solemnest meal imaginable; I addressed one remark to each of my neighbours & one to the man

opposite, all of which had the same  
fate, like dropping stones into the  
ocean. No one opened conversation  
with me & there was no general  
talk at all. Last night began  
as badly. I was sitting next the  
doctor with an old major opposite  
the M.O. began by talking of his  
rheumatism - the major offered  
him champagne; he refused, so the  
major turned to another of his kind  
"What do you say, Good? Kill the  
bug tonight! Do us good". So they  
split a pint. Luckily the younger  
element prevailed; my neighbour  
proved quite human & interested  
& it was a pleasant little party  
- pleasant perhaps on account  
of its smallness. I had a stable



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Company last night, a young fellow  
who turned out to be a Cartesian  
& was there a short time with  
me. I think we shall get on  
quite well. He seems both lively  
& sensible.

I can't say my  
bed is a brilliant success yet  
- I can't imagine why straw  
should be so hard & anyway  
it's a bad plan to lie along the  
crest of a mountain. The mess  
is a quite sufficient/ accommodating  
rooms - or rather suite of rooms &

The whole camp is well-arranged  
& hospitable. I had a good hot  
bath before dinner last night.

I'm proposing to walk down  
to Stehen Abbas for lunch at  
the Plough Inn, an old friend,  
& walk up the river & back  
over the hills before dinner.  
It ought to be lovely - now that  
the weather seems decided to  
be nothing worse than showers,  
& there are lovely glimpses of  
sunlight.

Arlesford 4.30 p.m.

"Where have you been this day?" they asked.  
"To Brown Candover, & Swarston & old  
Arlesford. Through Lord Ashburton's park  
I came & no asking; & a fine park it  
is. But the Plough Inn - at Stehen Abbas  
that is - has gone down hill these days;  
no victuals supplied here these twelve months  
they said, when I inquired for dinner."  
And old & his curts is no great dinner  
indeed for a walking man. But we'll  
see what the Black Swan can do for  
tea?"

"The Black Swan can do well. I was just  
well sat down to a plate of bread & butter  
which was white bread & yellow butter  
& none of your was variety & margarine  
when in comes two young officers  
wanting tea & asking for ham with it  
- as though hams would drop from  
the fruit-trees. "No dem" said Mr Swan  
But there was jam made of raspberries  
(a wise man eats it with a spoon);

& there was white lump sugar abundantly.

\* \* \*

It sounds like business doesn't it?  
But what the Army does in England  
I have yet to learn.

I must now get on with my walk  
& get back for dinner - through  
Titchborne, Cheriton & possibly Hinton  
Amphess to get the best way over  
the downs for sunset.

Good bye & much love to you.

Your loving  
George.

