

Thursday, July 13

My dearest Ruth, Somewhat of a gap  
I'm afraid. I'm doing a spell in the O.P.  
I came up here on Tuesday evening:  
a lonely flat hill-top with a wide view  
of bare rolling country intersected by  
the white lines of trenches & broken  
here & there by little woods. For  
companions two signallers Scotsmen  
For comfort a bed of rabbit wire  
in a wet clay hole, a pipe, or sauce-  
pan to brew my excellent bread & coffee  
over the tannoy's cooker. The Hun is  
not much in evidence though I saw  
about 60 passing in small groups  
along a distant road - that was  
between 5 & 7 a.m. Now at 11 o'clock  
I have just finished registering one  
of our guns on a distant windmill.  
I enjoyed doing that; the gun did the

Unexpected a Lithgow was in a state<sup>2</sup>  
of great incredulity, owing to my large  
corrections for line - but I scored heavily  
by getting a hit with the last shot.  
The variable-powered telescope which I  
have been using is an ingenious  
instrument & I had quite a good view  
of the windmill though it's about  
8500 yds from here. The holes in  
its well battened sides give me a  
 queer mixture of pain & satisfaction.

I was rather depressed last night,  
a field gunner who visited this post  
yesterday was telling me some unpleas-  
ant tales of what he had seen in the  
trenches. The pity of it all! Sometimes  
I have to think very hard about the Durs  
mistake, to make up my mind to it. If  
the settlement of this business was  
in the hands of the German ranks  
a file - our own I believe they would

Say at once 'Let's chuck it - not be  
Suck damned fools any longer.' It's  
So hard to feel 'Luckily it's not in their  
hands?' I have honest doubts too  
about our offensive - with no particular  
reason. I do hope it is doing all it was  
expected to. Of course it's a commonplace  
to observe that this is the great crisis  
of the war - but what a crisis!  
What will be the fresh mental attitude  
of the German people when they are  
faced with - something very unlike  
victory? And if they should resolve  
to fight to the last?

I hope I may have a letter from you today,  
my dear one; the last reached me on  
Monday. In it you tell me about your  
visit to London. I am very glad you saw  
Mr. Reade; I am sure she is one of the  
best of women. I'm told her that I  
'like the life out here' so she was

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Surprised by that. I wonder what she  
understood by it. It's not a style of  
existence I particularly care about & I  
would never choose the soldier's profession.  
Probably campaigning is more tolerable  
than the artificial peace-time intimacy  
of the barracks - the hot-bed esprit de  
corps & diverse forms of purblind  
eye-wash. But No; I wouldn't choose  
the life for its own sake even as I find  
it at its best out here. Like the life  
I prefer to say that I like living; to be  
in a state of mind that won't say so much  
in to be defeated & the most degrading  
condition of that defeat is 'boston', its  
most usual companion 'self-pity'. No!  
I'm not bored & I don't intend to be,  
nor have I the faintest degree of pity  
for myself who have so much more  
to be grateful for than the great  
majority of men, though I believe I am

I am capable of feeling some for the <sup>5</sup>  
world at large - the world at war.  
It all comes, my dear Ruth, to what  
Hamlet ~~is~~ says, 'There's nothing  
good or evil in the world but thinking  
makes it so' - in this sense; - that  
living is fashioned by thought out of  
circumstances & to fashion it well  
or ill is in the thinker's choice. Far  
be it from me to say that it's always  
easy to think life good.

The reflection that disgusts me most  
at this moment - a jail-house  
that it's of universal application -  
is that we poor mortals are made  
of clay. Even so I'm sufficiently  
optimistic to entertain a healthy  
conviction that it wasn't wet clay  
- my thoughts about that substance  
are too obscene to communicate;  
and so far as I recollect it was  
never stated that we are to

return to clay. To Dust - I am<sup>6</sup>  
resigned to that thought because  
I shall spread so plentifully. To  
return to clay would indeed be a  
sort of immortality: but not one  
that Iamblich - not if it were  
wet.

I am here for three days & this is  
the second. Truly I thank God that  
he held his beautiful hand yesterday  
& has wet me with only a cool shower  
or so this morning. A signaller  
sits by my side & we keep our eyes open.  
There are only two spots where one  
can hope to see the enemy in person;  
we watch them periodically - he  
more than I just now while I am  
so busy philosophising to you. North  
side seems active to-day - or I should  
have more to do - reporting enemy  
fire etc. Provided God is

kind in the way I have indicated. I quite  
like to be here for a change - it's such  
a relief to get away from one's compan-  
ions isn't it? I really quite half  
feel this: but I don't think it comes of  
misanthropy - only that people  
interrupt thought so grievously.

I shall have done with this

letter now. The signallers are relieved  
at 1.30, so I hope they'll be in time  
to catch the despatch rider before he  
starts at 2.0. I shall try & get

a few letters or rather notes written  
- to various neglected friends - before  
I leave her to-morrow. This solitude  
suits the book. I do like to be alone.

Why do I talk about solitude  
when I have two companions?

Because they have not the right of  
interruption - the first of the right  
of man which makes the idea of

Next an Utopian dream.

Bless ya dear Ruth. What's the  
good of all this gas when I can't  
kiss you. Please try to feel kissed  
& write & tell me what like it feels.

I notice that I never say that  
I want the time to come when...  
perhaps I'm too proud; though  
ya often speak of it. Perhaps because  
I almost feel that things taken for  
granted are communicated without  
speech even at the distance.

I understand from the papers  
that letters are not to be stopped,  
so I'm happy to think that you'll  
be receiving my budgets from me.

Fare thee well beloved!

Yours loving George