

May 22 1916.

France.

My dearest Ruth, I come from a scene which I shudder to describe; I am filled with the burning sense of sin & shame & horror, for I have been participator in the act as well as witness. All our fairest fruit trees! all sacrificed! all their young limbs torn off to wither. First the pear tree; an object of beauty perhaps more than usefulness for he promised no fruit for this year - him I axed down with my own ruthless hands & his top has now been replanted in a hole dug near to his sad stump - like any sandy misbegotten plucked by a child's heartless hands; then there was the white cherry-tree, its long boughs all laden with green cherries. You should have seen the sufficiency way it was hauled with a bill hook. I thought the black-cherry tree was going to escape; three quarters of its lovely head was removed with a saw.

All this at the end of a rather busy time. I was out with the working party last night & carried upon my my back for a distance of half a mile (rough walking) six successive sand bags full of bricks. Back before 10 a.m. rather earlier than I expected. But it's not an easy job. The authorities are

pressing us to hurry, but you can't build very fast
with one whole brick to every twenty fragments.
The heat to-day has been unbearably oppressive & I
was tired enough after last night to start with
So you can imagine I haven't been feeling over-
brisk. I went to the work this morning & found
round to some R.E. folk who supply material.
On the way back this afternoon a thunder storm
came on - I halted it with delight; - but it
proved my down-fall, for the motorbike skidded
on a tram line. Very dirty - but the worst is I
broke my watch glass. Could you manage to
get any kind of a cover for it?

This is a hasty letter before going to bed, as we
had to busy ourselves with figures this
evening. I forgot to tell you the reason for
sacrificing the poor trees - two new gun positions
required; hence also the figures. I must to
bed betimes as I want to get out early to my
working party to-morrow morning.

Please thank Mother for this excellent pencil -
the N.T. Your letter was a great joy - I will try
my hard to answer it to-morrow Afternoon.
Yr. loving George.