



OFFICERS' MESS,

T LINES,

AVINGTON PARK CAMP,

WINCHESTER.

Sept. 21. 1917

My Dearest Ruth, Nothing
I'm sure was ever so beautiful
& thrilling as the erection of
our billiard table. Before lunch
we had merely the skeleton - the
fat shining legs & shining
sides & a certain framework
while all the paraphernalia was
stowed in a corner looking
exactly as if some great conjurer
was coming to make an exhibition
of wonderful dexterity. And
now the ^{slaty} marble slabs are
being carried in by bands

of stalwart men detailed for the
purpose at this afternoon's parade
- there's never a lack of labour
in the camp when it's a question
of work in the officers' mess -;
a very important man is directing
the operations and indicating
with a superb gesture that
the heavy sleds must be handled
with a reverence or gentleness
such as would fit an emperor's
coffin. I'm afraid it's a
bad table - I can see that
the wood is not well seasoned.

But I foresee it will last out
my time. The venture has
cost some £70 in all & you
might ask how we manage to
afford so much; but so far as
I understand it is not we who
pay, but past generations of
officers who as they have passed
through this haven of comparative
refuge have been heavily mulcted
with no apparent object - till
suddenly, you see, this glorious
thing has happened - so it was
worth while after all, for us.

I went down to Winchester
yesterday evening & fixed up

with Robin Garbutt the final
details of the magnificent
borrowing of his motor bike. I
never was so ashamed, as I have
never before borrowed on so glorious
a scale. Protestingly I accepted
one bounty after another as it
was offered by these generous
people till, God knows, I hadn't
the strength to do anything
but say meekly 'Thank You' every
time, & came away burdened
with overalls & a tin of carbide
& motor goggles without considering
that the bike itself has been
put in order for me - that
I start with a full supply of



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petrol & oil. Surprising that
they didn't also press upon me
a pair of boots lined with fur
& a cap à la Cosaque with ear-
flaps. I am to fetch
the great beast this evening
from a garage in Winton - to tell
the truth I am feeling a bit
nervous. Surprising that after
a series of humiliating attempts
to ascend St Giles's Hill, the
perspiring officer should then
be approached by inquiring
Robert - well, he might be

put off by the previous rider's
licence. But supposing half
way up Melstead Down to-mor-
row the least should be seized
with a monstrous indigestion...
... however I can wear, as
indeed has been actually commens-
ed, to me specially, at last and
splendidly I can wear SPURS -
and with them I must 'poke
the sides of my intent', but
not the petrol tank.

I hope to get off about 10 o'clock

to be with you before noon - but I
can't promise. In any case I'll
come for lunch, though at worst
I may not arrive before 2.0 -
the worst short of one of the
unthinkably worstest events.

Well then till, all so shortly,
to-morrow.

Your loving George.

R	G
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R.	G.
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