

March 12 1917

My dearest Ruth,

I am now over at the left half - north of the river once more. It's a very agreeable place in a deep little valley - a fold of the downs. Unfortunately, the woods have been utterly destroyed. The spring has come upon us with a rush; it was so warm yesterday that I had to take my coat off as I was walking over here for even a moderate degree of comfort; it was a lovely walk, the sky all full of light and colour with the warm south wind. I walked for a mile or so along the bank of the canal. The valley too was looking lovely. The real winter is over, and the worst of the mud. It rained heavily last night but in spite of that the ground is fairly dry this morning. In December after rain like that we should have been slipping through mud & puddles. I like seeing the men of the left half again - of course I know them much better than the right half; they are a nice lot & smile in a friendly

way. The officers quarters here are not much to boast of. The mess is not water tight. but we don't expect to be here for long. I am alone here with Dunbar at present. Johnson is at the O.P. & will be coming back to night. He (i.e. Dunbar) is a rather unhappy little bird, rather full of trifles & little prances. He doesn't seem to have much idea of amusing himself. However we sat quite pleasantly over the fire & I read poems to him from the Golden Treasury. He seemed to like Shelley, but didn't care much about Keats; he hasn't the habit of reading poetry but I'm pleased to observe that he has picked up the book now & is reading it.

We were told yesterday that there was to be no mail for eight days - but that seems not to be true, for there is one today, & we shall get our letters from the other half this evening.

The air is beginning to be full of hopes & expectations once again as it



was before July 1. It looks to me at the present moment as though the Hun had mistaken our intentions - but his reason for withdrawing on the Ancre may have been merely tactical - to have a more easily defensible line in that part. He can't have released many men from those parts at present I should think. The news all round seems good in a small way. When we first heard of the German retirement it was thought that they intended to get back to the Hindenburg line by March 25; it looks now as they won't succeed in doing that, if they want to. The French seem to have done well again in Champagne, & we have been making some useful raids & little attacks very successfully on this front. I suppose the big battles must begin before very long. I wonder what folk at home are thinking now about the war. Are they still optimistic? I meant to ask you long ago what you

from you to-night. One from Arvie.  
Glad Night behind great love to you  
your loving wife

were doing about the War Loan? I'm  
afraid I let it all slip by - I had it  
the vaguest idea how much money I had  
at Cox's - couldn't find my pass book - or  
rather I was separated from it - & I hoped  
you would manage the Capital & Counties  
- but perhaps you were too unwell  
to bother about it? If my pass book is  
sent in to you nowadays you might  
keep an eye on my dividends - see that  
they are being paid regularly - such as  
they are I had a vague idea that you  
forwarded a dividend warrant to me  
at the same time that Arvie's trustee  
business came on - but I could find  
no trace of it so I hope you didn't?

I wish I could see the Winter Gaster  
now & sit there with you. I suppose the  
woods are very backward? They are here -  
the trees, even the un wounded ones hardly  
look as though they would ever be green.  
We had the news of Bagdad this evening -  
quite pleasing & not very important from  
the point of view of the war. No letter