

? 1915 or early ¹⁶
[? 7 May 1916]

No. 1. General Base Depôt,

B.E.F.

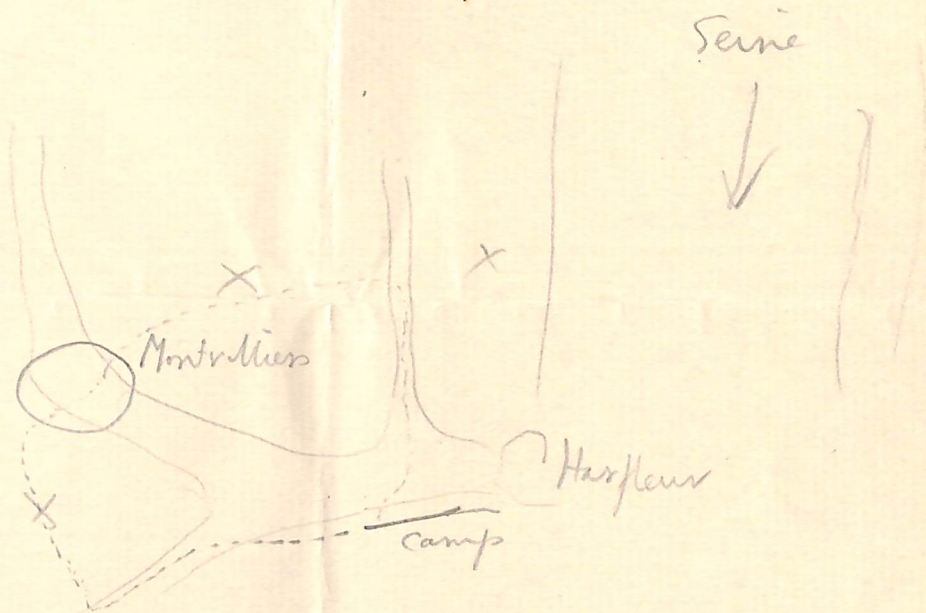
My dearest Ruth, I'm in a fuzzy state after standing about in an east wind, but I shall try to write you a proper letter while I still have the chance - I mean that once I begin the next move it won't be so easy for a day or two.

From which you may gather that I have no news of that kind yet & we needn't talk any more about it. I don't like waiting here; we are sent to look at various works going on in the training ground at the top of the hill & are also supposed to censor letters for a time in the morning - but that doesn't make a life - it is practically an existence of suspended animation so far as the military job is concerned. You know how I always want to see the days mapped out with plenty to do so I need hardly say I want to move on.

Sunday is a holiday here, but our morning was more or less filled up, 15th censoring letters then at 9.45 revolves practice in passing rain. I

ought to have told you first about the buying of a
revolver; that was done in Harrow on Saturday
afternoon. ~~Further more~~ but it comes upon me
that I have already told you of that expedition. Any
way the revolver ^{shots} & if I saw a German 20 yds
off & he gave me plenty of time to aim, I
might hit him. After our firing the colonel
talked to us in a body & presented us with
a reprint of an article on the 'soldier's character'
from the Times - do you remember we read it
in the train coming from Weymouth after
the course? We were then shown a gas helmet
with exposition of how to use it & how to train
a detachment to use it properly. The danger of gas
when you're with guns comes from gas shells &
no doubt the helmet can make that perfectly
safe - but how unpleasant to use it! one
item of the description given us was perfectly
horrific, & one is generally sick, I gather, with
the smell of it. I take such things simply as
part of the general beastliness to be expected of war
& 'that's the end on 't' - until I actually meet
them

The afternoon was beautifully fine & fresh after the rain. I walked alone. My dear, this is the most lovely country. The camp itself is on a sunny hillside overlooking Harfleur (though only the Chancel tower is much to be seen), which itself lies in the edge of the great Seine estuary — 4 or 5 miles broad I should think & green up to the water's edge — and at the junction of 3 other ^{minor} valleys which join the Seine valley there — the sort of thing



The three X's are flat topped tongues with clumps of wood & the dotted line represents my walk. It is a wonderfully well-wooded country but with many big open spaces which give glorious views. The valleys are fairly well populated with farms, mills, etc. & every farm seemed to have a lovely orchard. I also saw half a dozen good chateaux. The whole country is brilliant

with the fresh greens, beeches & poplars particularly -
& here & there a good mustard field shows up. I amused
myself somewhat in Montvilliers with small children
until they became too importunate, when I fled into the
Church. They demand 'souvenirs', & what they especially
wanted was buttons & badges. I had to explain that in
England an officer without buttons wouldn't be obeyed & they
had to content themselves with your ticket to Woking (hope
you won't want it!) & two pencils. The Church is

very good - a fine Norman nave which made me feel
somewhat ^{out} of concert with the nave of English parish
Churches & a quite beautiful apse, which if one
saw it in England, one would put down as XIVth century.

A service was going on, apparently in memory of dead soldiers
for almost everyone except young girls & a very few soldiers
was in black. I saw a list of killed from Montvilliers in
the Church porch & counted 75 names. The town looked
about the size of Dotalming without Jasncombe, so the
the number doesn't seem very great - though if we
were to judge from that alone the French losses would
be perhaps 300,000 killed. Quite enough in all conscience
- but such a computation means absolutely nothing
by itself & they have lost far more than that.

It is now 5.30 & as I want this to go before 6.0, I
must bring it to an end soon. I feel I might pro-

talking to you for a long time — chiefly about the attitude already to be noted here of men towards war. But I shall have much more to say about that later on; it promises to be very interesting.

Meanwhile I enclose a cutting from a French paper which contains some good remarks, though some of it is waxy journalism, about the Postul Tommy — I doubt if you will be able to make much of it, though I wish Hawes would enjoy it if he is with you — but will you in any case pass it on to Chilton-Brock.

Now dearest Ruth, Good Night. I wish I could kiss your face my dear — Should I find it smiling now? I hope so. The bravest thing you can do is to be cheerful. I ought to get a letter from you to-morrow; I do want that.

With all my love to you.

George

Document is in someone else's pocket. I'll hope to send it on in my next.

G.H. Liph-Malloy