

[1916]

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Aug. 27, 1915.

My dearest Ruth, I've just had the most desperate hunt I've ever hunted. My condition has been perfectly pitiable; for nearly an hour I have feared or felt convinced that the notes for the Book of Geoffrey were utterly lost. It was quite decided that my man Symons, the hotel valet who has the detestable habit of shuffling papers away into holes & corners & other damned filthy places - should never touch my things again - rather than see his fine fingers wandering over my possessions with impudic deftness. I was resolved to have no servant. And now I have just pulled the lovely sheet of paper, neatly folded, from an unsuspected pocket. Unfortunately the service which was being decently conducted nearby (my scene of anguish hid the while within a tent) has ended - or I shouldn't be writing to you, but mingling my music with the band & singing a hymn even if it were "Onward Christian Soldiers," much more if it were "All people that on earth do

swell' which the first hymn was. Would  
the persons agree that the next best way of  
praising God was to write to my wife?

I am completely recovered of my bodily ills - which  
were quite sufficiently grievous: - this chiefly  
through an expedition rashly undertaken yesterday  
in a side-car - the rashness lay as I afterwards  
found in entrusting my person to the care of  
an incompetent driver - an Irishman from  
another battery who was so delighted when  
he (or I) managed to get the engine working  
properly that he went full bat along one  
of the worst roads in the country. I can't  
think why all the springs weren't broken  
But we managed to reach Corbie, where  
the Ancre joins the Somme & there I purchased  
several things for the men - notably some  
pretty caps & a fine big china teapot -  
very fine purchases.

The country was glorious yesterday - for  
three days I practically hadn't seen it; two  
spent in bed & one confined in the double sick

of patient & orderly officers. We have been visited recently by showers of rain (it is pelting down at this moment making music on my tent), & yesterday was divinely fresh & clear by consequence - which atmosphere seems best to suit the landscape; like many parts of France as it would appear, the charm lies in the size of the view.

I begin to have a quite different feeling towards a tent which I have always before rather despised as a habitation. Clearly if it is to serve that purpose it must be a snicker tent - not a mere shelter thou like my little chimney one. And further with its seemingly insupportable inconveniences it is meant for one person - I don't say that two accommodating people might not pass ~~even~~ a wet day within (and what other day would one want to pass that way); but it must be well understood that it is not the dwelling place of two. The charm of a tent lies partly in the way one looks out upon the world through the slit - & for that the ground should be as flat as possible in front of it -

o part of the light which is most beautifully diffused.

One meets a number of the more blighted sort of soldiers behind the lines. Some day I will give you a regatta of the A.S.C. fellows I meet with - but I can't bring myself to that so long as I'm their guest. I've hit upon rather a happy phrase as a fancy for the modes of expression of a number of rather empty-headed youths who say "Cheery Ho! Here's fun!" & of whom one is instantly aware that they carry a handkerchief in their sleeve (not that this can't be done with dignity, though it must feel very unpleasant) - they are as easily recognisable in the army as in civilian life. A very good way of classifying them is to credit, or debit them with "The Splash Manner". Will that do? Brother Trafford

by the bye is not wholly without it. I heard from him yesterday - a long, interesting & affectionate letter. He is having a good time & no doubt deserving it - building a tennis court!

Your letter of yesterday was particularly  
delightful - especially all that you said of  
Mrs Huxley and her attitude towards her  
children - Yes, I'm sure that's the great  
general truth of the matter, just to be the  
thing required. Still there must necessarily  
be many values which would not sufficiently  
impress themselves on a child's mind or might  
escape its observation altogether if they weren't  
somehow rubbed in - And in the end you  
want to give it something more than good  
manners & even than nice feelings - the  
elements of a philosophy of life. Vide  
the Book of Geoffrey - which as you  
may imagine has completely hung fire while  
I have been suffering from headache: but I  
shall be thinking about it again to-day.

Are you yet at Aldersburg? I wonder I hope  
you'll enjoy being there. I think you ought to  
Dear love, how I want to hold you in my  
arms & kiss you. That will be sometime -  
Now farewell dearest Ruth.  
Your loving George