

Oct. 29. 1916.

My dearest Ruth, To-day has been so utterly disgusting that I have been quite demoralised - cold pitiless rain & by consequence no duties - I simply fled into a book & beat my feet against the boards of the mess-room walls - Thus all the morning; I wouldn't face the chilliness of my own apartment. However the book has proved to be a very good one - Felix Holt, by George Eliot; I earnestly recommend it to your attention.

I don't know what to say in answer to your latest remarks about religion; it irritates me that I can't talk with you; it seems to be a subject for discussion in letters, & I'm so afraid of causing you pain by anything I may say. Our points of view are still a long way apart, especially in regard to the New Testament which I regard simply as a fallible human record of a wonderful man, which I understand, or try to understand in its historical setting. Whereas for instance you apply to the Gospels for guidance about public worship & find 'forsake not the

assembling of yourselves together" & take that as a general injunction to humanity. I look upon that saying as a rather obvious though very important piece of advice to a small minority who must stick together if they are going to further their cause ~~and~~ and as having no application whatever to your problem. Nor do I entertain the slightest respect for the Church as a divinely instituted. The origin of the Church is simply the meetings (Ekklesia in Greek) of the early Christians, who all knew each other; in the present state of Christendom I see no need for the universal Ekklesia - the Church - any more than we have a universal Shakespeare Society; pervert Christians are perfectly at liberty to form societies for learning & discussing the wonderful moral wisdom of Christ & that would seem to be a very good thing to do - in point of fact isn't that what we are always doing in an indefinite sort of way? we discuss ethics when the spirit moves us & the teaching of Christ is at the root of it all.

My dear, I'm afraid you're a long journey of doubt & difficulty before you; you can't get these things

Straight in a few months; they require long study.

Why not start with Renan's Life of Jesus & then read the Gospels again with all the questions which that book will raise in your mind? You have only to send a p.c. to The London Library, St James's Square & the book will be sent.

I had two letters from you this evening & an excellent cake arrived yesterday. We have been enjoying the preserved fruits & ginger altogether. I feel as though I ought to feel spoilt. This afternoon, with great resolution I arranged to go for stuff to a new E. F. Canteen nearer here than the others but not yet known to me. When I came up from this deep hope to the upper air I found that the weather was clearing, so that was better. We found the canteen with some difficulty; it was too full of expectant people with lists in their hands to leave us any hope of being served to-day so I am going to be there when it opens at 80 a.m. to-morrow.

I must now seek the only comfort - BED.
Oct. 30. Weather still atrocious; wind very high
cold. I got my stuff from the Canteen all right after
some delay. At all events I have done something today
that has taken me out. Bell is at the O.P., but
reports he can see nothing. Carl told me that when
he was last in the trenches with another man they
tried for 15 min. to pull an officer out of the mud
but failed until further assistance was obtained.
It is quite a long while now since I have been to the
front line. If ever we push the Huns over the
Bapaume ridge that game will start again. I
can't think how miserable the infantry must be
in trenches that have not been properly dug &
drained for these conditions. But I expect they
have trench boards by now. Ditch must be even
worse off as his front line is on lower ground &
gets more bashed about by shell fire.

I must now take some measures to prevent the rain
beating into my dug-out. I haven't yet got a stove.

I am longing to see you again. Is it possible to
be patient?

Great love to you my darling

Your loving George