

Thursday July 27

My dearest Ruth Your letter was waiting for me yesterday when I came back from the front line & I much enjoyed reading it in bed. There is a great deal to say in answer - so much that I feel it's impossible really to go into the relations of the good, the beautiful & the true; Mr. Bosck's book will answer your queries to some extent. I should love to discuss it all with you. For the present occasion I will content myself with a general disagreement with your view that the good & the true are so much more settled than the beautiful. Of course the beautiful seems peculiarly a matter of taste - but aren't we thinking rather of the finer shades of the beautiful? And isn't beauty in its general opposition to the mean, the sordid, & the grim as well-established as goodness in its simple opposition to glaring sin or truth as opposed to the most obvious errors. I think you underestimate the extent to which current morality & current thought have been challenged & are subject to change. You could no doubt get a very large number of people to agree with you (though by no means all) in saying that it is bad to steal, but you might well find half of them disagreeing as to when a man would be justified in taking what belongs to another. It is only when there are opposed values that a moral decision is difficult; but how

often that is the case!

The mail is uneasy to-day & I have had a letter from you in the course of writing this. I am very glad you take to 'The Ultimate Belief' so whole-heartedly.

Thank you for Sidney Cockerell's message; please let him understand that if my cup of regrets were not long ago full I should feel it a fresh insult that the war had caused me to miss his visit to Westbrook. Indeed, indeed I would quite particularly like to witness that — partly I want to see him with your father because he is so wonderfully absolute in matters of taste & because it would give me another opportunity of studying the perpetually interesting problem of the spirit of William Morris as it has been handed down. Cockerell was a subject for some laughter at Cambridge for his amazing devotion; but he was welcomed as one of the angels, & if as I suspect he's hardly counted still as precisely such (I refer to Cambridge just before the war) it's much that he should want so decidedly to be on that side. For my own part I always worshipped his woven blue hat & it would please me greatly — I should wave my hand — if I were to see it again. Poor Mr C. & poor husband! But it makes me suspect them of being

fools - I hardly doubt this damned precious life  
of culture was the cause of her trouble. God forbid  
that I should be uncharitable.

Nothing more has transpired yet with regard to  
the aeroplane work & I took my turn in the  
forward post yesterday. A good day, quiet at first  
& in the afternoon very interesting. I had a glorious  
view of some 9.2 hour fire at the Hun front  
trench & also of a bombing attack. And the saying  
I quoted to you about the comparative safety  
of the actual front trench was amply borne out;  
I was fortunate too in finding a very safe way  
of getting there & back - rather a gruesome way  
however as one meets a stark country. Altogether  
the gruesome enters in a good deal. Happily my  
nerves are quite unaffected by the loss - not  
so my size: but oh! the pity of it! I very often  
exclaim when I see the dead lying out. And  
anger I feel too sometimes when I see corpses quite  
unexcusably not buried.

Good news has come in to-day - I don't know how  
good - that depends so much upon whether we  
hold what we get & what the relative losses are.  
I fancy that in the recent fighting we have  
reason to be satisfied on both these heads. Very heavy

