

Nov. 20. 1916

My darling, I'm sorry I wrote you such a gloomy little note yesterday - but I suppose it was better than not writing? The war had the best of me with a vengeance - to-day I'm getting my own back quite cheerfully. The worst of these winter conditions is that the more vile they are the less there is to do. And yet however little there is to do it seems almost impossible to get rid of it: perhaps that's because I'm demoralised - indeed I have been rather in a drifting state lately, & I can see I shall have to take life in hand. If only I could order my day so as to do fixed things at fixed times to some extent! but that is impossible because one always may & often is ordered to do something or other quite unexpectedly. Still I think I might make some plan about the evenings; I must try; I shall be less sociable I expect when Bell is gone, though it's difficult to forecast the future; that will make it easier to settle down to some mental ~~empty~~ occupation. I'm afraid a lot of energy goes in fighting cold & discomfort.

Last night I was much cheered by the appearance of Plathauer, Leo his brigade doctor, & Gulmer the doctor who is with Chamber. quite a nice man



I think I must have mentioned him before. We played Bridge after they had eaten dinner (Bell went up to a farewell party at the right half & I had fed before I knew they were coming). It was quite amusing. I found myself quite gay talking about books & not to some extent: and yet I had been so depressed before that when I heard they were coming I was annoyed. Is it that I have a very ready response to the presence of fresh people? Or that it is almost a necessity for me to have a certain kind of mental excitement if I am to keep in spirits? In any case it seems feeble to be so dependent on anything exterior.

I suppose in common parlance I'm 'wanting leave'.

And yet when I'm depressed even that vision is under a shadow; I try to spur myself into a pleasant frame of mind by thinking of you, but when I see that even that charm won't work & I begin to wonder whether after all I shan't wear a gloomy face in those scenes I become disgusted of associating you with my depressed picture, lest you should be tainted. You are a charm that must work, or if you won't, if I see you're not going to work, I won't try you, I'll shut you out & not think of you till I'm better.

I believe depression with me



Comes most often with me through a discontented attitude towards my activities. That is a great danger out here, because nothing I am obliged to do seems, in a sense, worth doing; nothing calls into play more than a small fraction of my ... what shall I say? my intellect; rather I think myself. And yet the satisfaction I mean and can only come, situated as I am, from performances in the sphere of military duty.

(Resumed shortly before tea time) This afternoon I have again been digging & feel more of a man thereafter. My mind is full of attitudes. How I should like to be able to draw what I see! I seem to have acquired a quite special feeling about men digging. My diggers would be simple, solid folk alive with the very spirit of honest toil that you know when you see it, belongs to the earth through the centuries. Jean-Francois Millet might almost have painted my people, but his axe more striking, more sudden; mine would be more there, in a deep unperturbable mysterious harmony with the soil itself. You would feel all the stiffness of the clay and the spiritual comfort of getting the better of it.

Here comes the postman - farewell dearest love. How soon I wonder? Oh! my dear it will be said to sa you. Your loving George