

My dearest Ruth,

France,  
Wednesday June 14

Yesterday was a truly depressing day here. It may be amusing to find oneself dumped with a tent by the road side with plenty of digging to do provided a certain clemency on the part of Providence. But the cold & wet here are like another February. The best plan I to meet the situation would be for each officer to have a separate cave; from this he would emerge at intervals & shed cheering words exhibiting his radiant countenance to the companies of diggers & to it return to concentrate his spleen alone within the dank walls. The pitiless rain hinders our work considerably - You can't let men be altogether bowed with no prospect of drying their clothes. To-day however we have farrel better; a clearing day & a drying wind. I have spent the afternoon on a motorbike, first) attacking the R.E for the many things we want - pit props, timber, iron rails, sandbags, wire netting etc. of which the supply is still inadequate for the demand - though after all it is said it must be admitted that we have had a good deal & shall get more as the days go by. And then when that quest had ended we no more than a hope for to-morrow. I searched the country for bread & potatoes; the first was unobtainable;

the bakers can't get flour & the mills can't get  
corn. I suppose this is only a local condition & perhaps  
it was a more remarkable fact that we could get  
French bread where we were before. Ration bread  
is supplied to the troops - since we have been here  
in insufficient quantities - but it is difficult  
to eat. We also draw potatoes sometimes, but not  
nearly enough for our needs. However I brought  
back 3 kilos this afternoon together with a kilo  
of fresh peas & a sample bottle of red Bordeaux  
wine. So far since we have been here we have  
drunk nothing but tea as the facilities for  
boiling water are wholly inadequate; but now  
that I have discovered where it can be procured  
I hope to get a supply of wine for the mess.

Feeding is quite a serious difficulty when one  
arrives in quarters such as these - for all of us  
I mean men & officers alike. Yesterday the mess  
was very fortunate, chiefly because the mail  
arrived, & I fed like a lord on haggis & plum-  
pudding both provided by Capt. Lithgow. As a  
rule our only chance of sweets is tinned  
fruit & as mess secretary I draw the line at  
opening a tin at every meal even when we

happen to have a supply. But for the worst  
of our discomfort has been caused by our cook - quite  
a character this man; in spite of his sloppy over-  
grown appearance with sloping shoulders & puffy  
cheeks he retains a distinct Englishness - the  
Englishness of the 'regular pickle'; if there's a mess,  
one feels he's sure to be in it. I don't know  
whether it's worse to see him keeling his greasy  
pots & fingering raw meat with his filthy  
hands than to sit down before the dirty dishes  
he sends to our table.

But I dare say we  
shall see the last of him soon, - for we expect  
the other half-fattening in a day or two & they  
will bring - cook. While I am dealing  
with this subject; - will you please send out  
some more tea; we consume it at an enormous  
rate.

I read your letters all again in bed last night  
& enjoyed them hugely. I'm sorry I didn't answer  
before about the coffee cups; but how should I  
have an answer to such a question? I expect you'll  
fix it up beautifully my dear one. I'm very glad  
you are getting on with the china painting. Have  
your last lot been fired yet? I wonder how they

have turned out or will turn out - whether the column  
will be those you expected.

The Hun is leaving is entirely alone at present  
& we hunt - necessarily as we have not yet our guns  
- we shall have them very soon. I love to think  
of you seeing my friends in London - Do see  
Will if you can. You'll have great talks  
with Ralph I expect about my doings. It's no use  
your trying to calculate where I am by the length  
in time of the journey hither. Suffice it to say I  
am in the British part of the line.

This must stop or I shall be neglecting my  
duties - Good bye dear Ruth - don't  
be anxious. So far I've been safer everywhere  
since A than I was there; that position was shelled  
to some extent (I don't know how much) & set on  
fire the day after we left. All that's beyond all  
calculation. We are much further from the  
trenches here & less likely to be shelled as we  
aren't in a town or village - unless we are  
spotted - but I don't think we shall be.

All love dearest & some to Mary & Ralph.

Johnnie Gosse.