

Friday June 16 1916

France.

My dearest Ruth Another batch of letters has arrived from you today - so that I have had gotten in the last 3 days! It does make correspondence difficult - where am I to begin to answer you?

My time for writing is so scrappy & if I am fairly settled down I am certain to be called off. I have just read through again your five last letters; & that has taken half my time for writing & even now I have not a vague idea of what I want to say in reply.

Firstly about our last position - you were wrong in assuming that my dug out was on a bank facing the Huns; the 'cossie' ran parallel with the trenches & our guns naturally were on the far side from them, but not so our dug outs - & of course the nearer bank was much safer. On the whole that was not a dangerous place except for the fact that it was so thick with field batteries & that the Hun had already strafed it for that reason; in some parts the shell holes were pretty thick. The unpleasant fact was the prevalence of dead bodies; the ground seemed tainted & one always have expected to turn up a corpse when digging anywhere near the surface. My own dug out was clean & had no sign of previous fighting but a host of French rifle cartridges & half buried in the ground at the entrance some articles of clothing.

How different here! I hate

The proximity of the road - though there's good country all round there is no feeling here that one gets away into some secluded spot - our troops are too thick upon the ground for that. We have much less protection here against shell fire, because our position can be enfiladed on the bank in that case would be no protection; but on the other hand it seems less likely that the Hun will shell us. He is certainly remarkably quiet at present - Rumors has it that he has moved his guns 3 miles back from their previous position on this front in anticipation of events.

Our guns (not so big as you make out) are coming at last to night & our work of registration will begin early to-morrow morning - so I shall probably be up more or less all night. We shall be very busy now I expect; we have still plenty of digging to do and our guns to fight as well. I hope no great things are planned for this part of the line just yet - or I should feel pessimistic about the results. However, my dear Ruth, you must be prepared for long gaps in receiving news; Communications are the great difficulty of a big battle & it would be surprising if letters were sent home in

the usual way. I'm afraid you'll be much disgusted if you are say a week without news of me - but not anxious I hope. As I have said before there's no calculating the danger factor; we might be safer than usual in a big battle because the infantry were 'getting it all'; or contrariwise - but it's no use thinking about that. My position is comparatively safe & quite unbesieged - You must pin your faith to that - take off your hat (or whatever women do instead) to the infantry.

I'm delighted to hear of Clare waving her hand to you; what you say of her gives me quite a longing to see her; what will she look like by next time?

I'm pleased to hear of your seeing the Trocks & I shall be very glad to see his book - even if it arrives in the heat of battle! By the bye has he seen my pamphlet? He's the one man I should want above others to approve it - but then I should feel more shy about showing it to him. Did Arthur Benson have a copy? or Fletcher?

There - I must leave off now - I wanted to say so much more.

All my love to you dearest.

Your loving
George

After all I have a few more moments. I never felt very anxious about the Italians; the task of getting through them is too difficult, and they must be all right now. I think we may see how the war is likely to end in the month of August; by then the Austrians will have collapsed or given up if they are going to do that & we shall have seen something of what that will mean to the Germans; we shall surely by then know the real meaning of Verdun & have some idea of our own power of offensive. I expect the patient Toffe will strike this summer.

A fine & sunny day - the dust has almost begun to choke us already. The right half came along this morning & we are now a whole battery - at X we had $\frac{1}{2}$ another $\frac{1}{2}$ with us - a curious arrangement - no doubt a matter of discipline.

Bell went back to A after one day here & has now rejoined us. He saw the garden there & reports it much ravaged by Angles. The strawberries large but not yet set; radishes all gone; the seedlings for the most part doing well. I don't expect ever to see that place again - but who knows? Our major has been promoted & moved to the command of a Heavy Artillery Camp & we are hoping Littlejohn will be promoted to his place.

Good Night

Your best letter dated June 11