

July 20. Friday

My dearest Ruth, I had a more energetic day yesterday with quite a considerable amount of walking & some delving & picking in a hole of clay. It was ^a beautiful sunny time. When I say that I was in trenches that we have won from the enemy, you'll understand what my business was. We have more or less given up the place I spoke of - the 'rest cure' - & established ourselves in this other. It's rather a smelly part of the world; the trench has been knocked to pieces & the floor of it must be 2 to 3 ft higher than it was - I wouldn't care to dig there. We are working down into the side & except that ^{at} one moment it became necessary to light a cigarette we came upon nothing to make one sick. With most of the time spent upon the main business we make slow progress; but we have already made a little 'funk hole' big enough for two, or perhaps three at a pinch. The situation hasn't as yet proved a dangerous place; my turn to occupy it won't come round again till the day after tomorrow. In the evening I reconnoitred some ground about 2 miles away & got to our front line. It was a hot hard walk, as I had to hurry, & I took more exercise over that rough country than I've had for a long time - a circumstance that reacts pleasantly upon the spirits - ; there was an element of adventure to - some dangers had to be circumvented. And then of course I saw the show most dearly. - But how

little there is to see! A sight worth visiting perhaps if it were a question of going 10 miles in a sufficiently comfortable car. Ruin of course everywhere - but who wants to see ruins but for the fact that ~~that~~ these was once something more worth seeing? The ground is pitted all over with shell holes; but I feel no wiser for having seen them. The German dug-outs are a monument of patient toil - personally I feel quite willing to accept the fact that Fritz is willing to dig in order to save his skin & even that more inspiring thought that beer & tobacco are not wanting in the place dug - to accept these would such from our absurd newspapers which find them so thrilling. I saw one thing of interest in the trench which was the German 2nd line - a neat closet of reinforced concrete built into the angle of the trench. I do wonder that civilization has to that extent the letters of barbarism.

For the first part of yesterday Glen was my companion. A dumpy little man rather fat & jolly to look at, but not coarsely so; his forehead bulges slightly & he has small sparkling eyes; his hair is close-cropped. His mouth is one of the most expressive I have ever seen - consciously so in large measure & particularly for enjoyment and horror. Human & humanish he is really a great blessing; I feel quite an affection for him. His age is 3 or 4 years short of mine, but he must look

at least 10 years older. I find that he is rather easily depressed & put out. I suppose the trouble is that he has been out too long without leave — oh I don't wonder fellows get tired out here — after a year or so! This battery came out at the end of February — I wonder if it will complete its year.

You seem highly delighted by the good news I referred to — it has been a smack for the Hun & there is something to be pleased about: but I don't feel at all so optimistic as you. It all looks to me too much as though we're still only at the stage when weakening the enemy is the one consideration & winning ground has no strategic importance. Of course we are weakening him here & attrition must be perceptibly nearer the goal of rendering the enemy too weak to stay where he is — in Russia it seems to have accomplished so much already — I've no idea how much weaker he needs to be on this front. I allow myself to hope everything & expect nothing.

The journalistic capital which the half penny press is making out of the war just now — well I have a sort of disgust for it — like for vomit & such. Lord Hamworth passed on a car to-day & got out to look at one of our guns which was firing at the

time. I profoundly regret having missed him.
It would have been so satisfying to have had the
opportunity of expressing these sentiments. Probably
if I had been out on the gun instead of in the tent
drinking tea I should merely have felt impressed
by the fact that I was talking to an important
man. Oh what a peasant slave am I! And ^{how} dif-
ferent from your dear Ruth who would so readily
give him one of your direct hits no matter who he
might be. I don't believe you like being ragged on
that subject. By the bye I've noticed in your
recent letters a slight tendency to answer my
somewhat chaffing remarks in too earnest a tone.
Perhaps you take me too seriously altogether? Have
you forgotten what a whimsical fantastical creature
I am?
A very fine letter from you
again to-day. I don't understand how it is that
you apparently post every other day & get no day
is missed this end. Perhaps it is the haphazard
way in which days pass here without being register-
ed by name, number or event. Except for dating
letters to you I should never know where we
were in the week or even the month. I'm
glad to hear you get on better with Mrs Green -
& very pleased with Mrs Irvine's success. I hope
Clara's cold will be better soon. She seems to be giving you
a lot of trouble by being off her feet.

In our own hearts present to my friends dear to me & with a great
deal of love. Farewell. Your loving George.