

March 31 1938

My dearest Ruth, I've been treating you
very badly - but it's been difficult not
to - though I would have written a letter
last night if I had known there was an
chance of posting. We've been very lucky
since we left P. This is one of two more
or less unstrafed villages in these parts -
we have not only a sound roof over our
heads but glass in our windows. We
had an easy move too - we worked as long
as any light remained - hardly any thing
was left to do the next morning. True
I had to leap at daylight on a cold wet
morning & put in about 2 hrs. work
before breakfast - but one doesn't think
much of that. Today has been quite
amusing. We fired for the first time
& I was observing. It does seem queer
to see no trenches in front & hear practi-
cally not a gun firing on either side. I was
making out the country first - an open
country gently undulating with a number
of villages large & small dotted about -
from a slit in the end wall of a half

crushed house - in a most stupid way I
nearly had a very nasty fall; a ladder led
up to the first floor & the rafters had
been half burned through those that remain-
ed in place. The signaller ^{was} below & I was
asked to come & speak to the major; I
was delayed putting my glasses & compass
in safety & began to hurry down. I stepped
onto the single rafter near the ladder &
it gave way like straw; somehow I caught
the top rung of the ladder in my left
hand & with that support completely
stopped my fall & in the end descended
almost without descent. I felt quite
proud of it. After that I had an
exciting climb up a tall tree & observed
our firing in a gale of wind - a very
cold proceeding but quite satisfactory
to watch - we had half a dozen very
fine bursts on houses, wonderful fine
pink puffs, like a night march of
Gregory Porter & one quite that was
I think however it's rather foolish
to destroy future tickets - we, of course

were only carrying out orders. Meanwhile the infantry, starting from near my position, were attacking. That is to say long rows of them walked slowly across open fields, lying down at intervals until they occupied the village in front almost without opposition. They were fired on slightly by a Hun field battery but sustained no casualties. Near us two Lewis guns were firing & the enemy must of spotted them, for he sent over a dozen or so 'whizz bangs' which speedily shifted the gunners: my signaller had cover behind a wall at the time but it wasn't very pleasant for me. However, no splinters came very near me.

I came back in a leisurely fashion from the O.P. exploring two cypress on the way. Spring is late this year. Hardly a sign of life in the ground - though I found a few wood anemones in one spot. But the straight egypty withes in their wonderful bright colours (particularly a brilliant magenta), naked still but eager to burgeon delighted me. After tea, a

& after our post-firing calculations were finished I went to the cavalry mess just near us - principally to ask when they were going out, because we want them to get out. I was sitting peacefully chatting with them & smoking, when suddenly there was a fearful crash & all the panes in their windows came clattering down. I never saw men move so quickly - some of them & hardly one remained who had not taken cover after 2 seconds; the major first hid behind a door & then rushed out of the house. I quite thought it was a shell, but remained in my seat quite quietly - there's very little point in taking cover after a shell has arrived because the next is very unlikely to land in the same place, & I have long ago ceased to be startled unduly by loud noises - I wasn't feeling that they were ridiculous - you think they undoubtedly were as I quietly advised. But they certainly appeared to me very unhappy; & then

there came another fearful bang & we saw that it was my gun firing! A sudden celt had come & we hadn't had time to warn them to open their windows. I had to assume an apologetic attitude & to escape the worst of the noise led them out to a position behind the gun where they could see our work going on. I had hardly been there a minute when the major called for me & told me we had to drift 15-mph - he wanted me to go out with him at once & search for a position - that was at about 6 o'clock. We were back here at 7.20, I'm sure no position was ever more quickly found - there was practically no choice! We walked back discussing the best & most comfortable way of managing things - I quite resolved for a night up to a very strenuous day getting straight to morning. When we got back we found that orders had come in saying that the other half was to drift! Poor Karp, they have they have had the worst

of it this time. They have been living for
the last two days in the most miserable
of cellars, scraped out from among
the ruins & now they have to go to a
position where there is no cover whatever.
Not a bright prospect in these sleet
showers. But that's the sort of thing
we are in for.

I slept very comfortably last night with
the Johnson & Dumbas in a large
room in the village. I expect two
of the right half officers (Glen, Wood
& Hutchinson) will join us & only one
be left a duty at their new place with
the minimum number of men.

Three wonderfully good letters from you
last night & full of love. Thank you dear
so for all you say. Ah but it would
be nice to have you to smile to.

Have I acknowledged two excellent parcels
- a cake & sausage rolls, both very good,
much appreciated by all.

I'm not very well inside & consequently
tired. I shall probably have to guide you

you're
I'll take some rest now.
Good bye to the
position
after 10.0
later on
I think
them
to
probably