

May 19 1916

My dearest Ruth, I had a letter from you this morning - the first after all this time - in reply to my post from here. From which it appears that the post to Godalming takes 3 days each way. I also had one from David. But nothing has come through yet from Havre. I shall write there again to-night; but will you in any case when you get this (if you haven't done so) put down the address you used - I believe I made a mistake in giving you No. 1 Base Depot instead of No. General B.D. - but I don't know whether that would make any difference. Also can you remember what other letters you sent on?

My own dear, I was delighted to get your letter: I would have loved to see Clare playing with the daughter of Constance Mussen (whoever she may be). As to what I said about trench-mortars - it was not a question of me, but of what the army happened to require at the moment according to my informant - that, the fact that R.G.A. officers often do this work. It would have been a very dangerous job in the Salient. As it is I'm in a fairly quiet part of the line. It's noisy enough however for me. I find it difficult to sleep amidst the various noises.

I think the best I can do to tell you what life is like here is to describe two scenes I. 12:30 a.m. to 1:30 a.m. Yesterday morning: - The noise of several hoisters & a great bell clanging - a sort of medieval festival on a grand scale. Hurried figures moving in our slum street & some standing at the doors of houses looking

intently about them - All wear what looks like a mask with big goggles except the gun numbers who hastily make their way to the gun carrying a large parcel on their tummies from which a snake seems to leap up to their mouths. All stand about for an hour or so imagining at each moment that they see gas in any wisp of night mist that floats up the street from the dirty ditches. And then when it has been established that the gas has not come our way we all troop quietly back to bed. But what a way of being roused from sleep!

II Long grass & the breeze of early summer rustling in the trees above it; a wide space enclosed by brick walls having a garden down the east side. Two men in the middle of this space keenly observing the sky with field glasses - for hostile aeroplanes. A figure lying on a camp armchair idly reading a novel & another lying on the grass. From time to time their attention too is directed heavenwards as they watch the beautiful little white spheres of cloud, shell bursts from Archie (anti-aircraft guns) pursuing a shining cross in the clear blue sky.

I'm sitting out now, towards dinner-time. Occasionally I hear a distant ~~Cross~~ ^{crump} or the sharp crack of a field gun or Archie going off nearby. But chiefly I hear the soft whizz of shells like a distant railway train, the Hun firing at long range ^{far} ~~long~~ away from us; and some more shrill from English guns behind us.

And its only 10 mins since our band stoped - a notable
a harmonious band, 1 trombone, 1 ^{melodion} accordion, 1 penny whistle
Sometimes a tambourine (very home-made) - & once I've
heard Bell join in from a little distance off on his flute.

You will gather from this that there are many
idle moments in this job. Next week I shall be on duty
& therefore in charge here - whereby my responsibility
will be much greater, but no much more arduous
my work. Well, I've been very glad of a slack time
today. My stomach is badly out of order - even tea disgusts
me today & eat I cannot. We feed mostly on rations,
& I guess it was a kind of stew that upset me.

Don't be alarmed my dearest when I talk of gas. The
respirators are very efficient & really not hard to wear
(unlike the helmets) & we are far enough away here
to get plenty of warning. I'm afraid those poor
fellows in the trenches must get caught sometimes
as it takes a very short time to reach them - but they
know very much when to expect it from various
indications.

I was meaning to write to Mother to night but
I'm really too sleepy & tired. You might read out most
of this. I will certainly write to her to-morrow. I had
been waiting in the hopes of hearing from her.

I needn't answer your question as to cake, because I mentioned it before. Bell has had a cake this week, so it will be my turn soon.

I hope we shall stay here sometime. I couldn't bear to leave before our straw berries are ripe. I like being here alone with Bell - he is so charming & the men might be a bit stiff.

Good Night dear Ruth - my love to you all at B'head. I'm hoping for another letter to-morrow from you my sweet girl.

Yours loving
George

G. Malloy

Friday May 19 1916

