

Sunday May 14?

A delapidated old town in France

My dearest Ruth, I have had no letter from you yet; but I got a telegram sent through to the base yesterday with my address & that should bear fruit to-morrow - I shall be bitterly disappointed ~~to-morrow~~ if it doesn't. Can you imagine how I want to hear from you when I seemed to have lived ever so long in observation & emotion since we parted. I feel that I have told you hardly anything of what I have thought & experienced during these ten days - Can it really be only ten days? I think I want most to describe to you how I'm living & that can be done in a manner suitable for sending on - so I shall begin on a fresh page.....

After pp. 2 & 3 — It's getting late & I must go out & see the guard & then turn in. Next time I write I shall tell you something of our garden. For the present let it suffice that a large amount of excellent ground is free to plant; would it be possible to send me seedlings? Could they live 4 or 5 days by any means? It would be splendid to get some here & have some flowers later on if wise still here. Or if not that would it be too late to sow seeds of any kind? If you

think anything could be done about this please do it quickly.
Next - we should like some cake - a plum cake for choice if it's not too heavy. Remember small parcels come better than large.

Now my own dear Ruth Good-Night. I hope this letter will make you happy. I am happy, so you must be happy too. Dear dear dear Ruth

it will be a joy to get your letters - & to correspond with you. I hope my letters aren't literary. It's a nuisance I can't put pen to paper without thinking how I'm going to say things - & yet the thinking is all to get them down as I feel them & think them & would try to say them - only it makes such a difference that you aren't there to say them to.

My love to your family & ever so much to yourself
my dearest one.

Your loving George.



I think I have already told you that I am living in ²
a cottage; the cottage is in the middle of a straight
street, & before this street had the honour of accomodating
half a battery of H.M.'s artilleries it might almost have been
called a slum - except that over the way ~~and~~
green trees look over a garden wall. At one end of the street
is running water & beyond that flat meadows, trees &
farmsteads wearing early summer as gay as ever they
did. At the other end is a ^{half-}ruined church built of red
brick like every thing else. We - that is the 'left half section'
occupy a section of the street, ten or a dozen houses. My bedroom
is on the ground floor at one end & the officers' mess! at
the other. The only circumstance that might surprise
you is the furniture; in the mess we have a splendid
wardrobe & cupboard to match made of some light
wood highly polished, elegant & yet simple; in my bedroom
another good cupboard & a round oak table with leaves - genuine
antique - , and two notable ^{one} plush chairs, very well made
with low seats & square backs & hump around the nether
portions like a ballet dancer's skirt to half-hide the legs,
a charming fringe — all looted from a neighbouring
house. I like my little room better than this in one way; -
the door from the street & that leading through, in line with it
to the kitchen have been partitioned off to form a passage:
but this is swankier & can boast 3 panes of glass out of
four whereas mine my window is unglazed.

The officers in this mess are a very decent lot of fellows

(he's the only other fellow!)
Bell, the ranker, I told ^{myself} is very studious this evening - sitting up at the table (I in my camp arm-chair) with my French dictionary & scratching his head over the famous passage in Pascal's Pensées - 'L'homme n'est qu'un roseau'; the humour of it to me is that the light dawns so gradually, and in the end he'll appreciate it so well. As I see nothing practically speaking of anyone else it's very lucky I like this man - and that do I. Curious that I've met now three men of this métier - men who've started life in the Gunners as boys of 14 or 15 & taken commissions during the war or a little earlier - & find them wonderfully alike in having the most uncommon qualities - all quiet, observing men with a marked refinement of feeling & living in harmony with life in some queer rare way quite their own. All three so competent too so far as I can judge, & yet appassently so easy-going. Bell hasn't in the faintest degree any of the hard driving manner which is associated particularly with schoolmasters & Prussians & I'm afraid also with soldiers in general though for the most part I suspect undeservedly - he doesn't shout or swear or drill the men: but they know very well what they have to do & do it keenly; they would be gently & firmly admonished if they didn't. One doesn't often meet real competence so well combined with real Christianity.

As for me - In my imagine I drink at this fountain³
as deep as I can & I don't suppose I shall be found
swearing at 'em. I have had very little to do as yet;
'things are quiet'. We're had no shooting to do so far
in spite of the alarm my first night. I'm in command
of No. 4 gun detachment - under Bell's supervision.
I inspected gas-helmets to-day. I shall see the guard
to-night; - in short I've done one or two little jobs.
Beyond that I've been fairly busy finding out how every
thing works - what things are done & where & how and
where every thing is to be found. Well, we shall have
some shooting to do one of these days & plenty before
we're done. Meanwhile I've spent some time in an
observation post - plenty of 'em round here, & such high
places in the town; we use others nearer the enemy too.
Nothing to be seen of Fritz, but one knows where he is
on the map & in a good light could see his trenches.
I played the game, on my way to the o.p., of shell-dodging
- for the first time; quite an amusing game given
as much protection as we have here; you hear them
coming & get out of the way. Under these circumstances
one would be very unlucky to be hit. Stones falling
in a gully might be much more dangerous. But the
danger to a battery is that it will get 'spotted' by
an aeroplane; and then one day when the guns

are supporting infantry & can't stop firing Fritz
may start business in earnest. We take endless
precautions as you may imagine to conceal our movements.



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