

Tuesday Oct. 1 [1918]

My dearest Ruth, This is a mere line to let you know that we have arrived quite happily at our first destination some 15 miles behind the line. Yesterday was appallingly wet, but we managed to get some fun out of our journey in trucks & one of them has already become a comfortable officers mess & quarters. It is quite pretty country here - the typical Picardy country with wooded valleys & chalk hills. To-day I have been busy one way & another & it has been glorious fine. We heard this morning that Drai had fallen or was about to fall & I'm now wondering what we can fire at.

Great love to you dearest one
Your loving George.

P.T.O.

This letter can't after all go till to-morrow morning.
But I am tired & stupid tonight & don't expect
to make much fire at telling you our story.

It was an early start yesterday morning - but after
all not so very early; we breakfasted at 6.0. It fell
to my lot to march the men across C, though Pemberton
was orderly officer, because I happened to know the
way - a wild wet morning, but I enjoyed that
march; I suppose it seemed to me the beginning of
adventures; I was delightfully exhilarated &
it was lucky Knibbs came with me & kept the pace
down to the proper modest step for laden soldiers.
I thought of how good I was feeling & how I would
like to behave & how one can never ~~can~~ remember
what can make one good at the crucial moments
& how all that & much Christian Ethic might
properly be subjects for poetry. One's aim I make
out should be not to miss an opportunity for doing
others a good turn - the men of course primarily
because the possibilities lie chiefly in their direction.

An impracticably high ideal that seems to be when one thinks closely what it means & involves - so much more than merely 'considering others or the men first', though one would be mighty content to achieve that.

We found our trucks waiting for us at the appointed place - the trucks which are no present & future home; they are most unmysterious dwelling places, plain rectangular chambers, uncompromisingly bare having corrugated iron roofs (one is grateful enough for them), sliding doors in the middle of each side pierced by small square holes covered by a flap which acts as windows - one window on each side.

After loading up an uncertain length of time remained before the start, which turned out to be some two hours. It was not wasted time; the men immediately began to show signs of an acquisitive ability hardly to be suspected in the unripe simplicity of a small group of law-abiding gunners. It was a place of fortunate abundance & I don't know how much timber may have been deftly handed in

stowed discreetly out of sight, but I'm certain that before we went off every truck bar one was supplied with a brazier, & it became evident later that there was no lack of fuel. The officers also made preparations but rather on the principle that 'who doesn't ask won't get'. I fetch a splendid table which had been ordered previously & added thereto after friendly conversation with a certain amiable corporal two good chairs & a packing case - the used alternately as seat, cupboard & wind screen for Tommy's Coker. Knives with a true instinct for warmth acquired material to block & cover the all too frequent too large chinks in our floor; & he & I both acquired materials for shelves & achieved a profitable visit to a neighbouring canteen; meanwhile Wilson had safely brought into port a case of whiskey bought from a provident & smiling colonel.

It was a slow enough journey at first but we had our dispositions to make - the ultimate aim was to evolve order from a formidable ^{miscellaneous} pile of officers' kit, mess gear & our recent acquisitions. Like the Creator we seem to have begun by dividing the firmament from the firmament, for we elected to travel

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in the beginning with both doors open, for the sake of light & vision, so that there were two chambers, one on either side the path of a gale. By thus creating light so to speak on the first day in the same act with the division of the firmaments we were brilliantly orthodox. But our next step away from chaos was brilliantly heterodox. Unlike the Creator we esteemed next in order of importance the means of cooking; and instead of completing one act of creation before beginning another, it was necessary owing to the complex nature & formidable difficulties of our second act to allow its completion to take place ~~as~~ simultaneously with many other acts - there were moreover with us more than one creative being - so that the consideration of an acute cooking problem occupied our attention at intervals during the whole journey. Chaos had managed to throw out somehow a PromisStore new, shining & abundantly promising but as yet untried. As the battery possessed no pasaffin it was suggested petrol might do as well; this had to be procured from the store truck which was done at an early stop. But petrol after labours of pumping unremitting & a wonderful display of wit & vigour,

braked us to a magnificent display of fireworks but failed to "roar". Paraffin must be tried; but how to get it? The engine might provide - the engine did. The same process repeated with addition of black fumes & penetrating odours - followed by the same failure. The candles were examined; the artificers called; plugs of wood & paper brilliantly made; corks produced from bottles of hair wash: but all these produced but the gentle ripple of an inland stream compared to the roar of the sea, the sound required. The exhibition ended with final proofs of the oxygen first causes of things that ought not to be, but not before it had fulfilled a function of diversion.

The full recital of our creative activities would take me till long past bed-time. You may imagine how rails were hastily driven for pegs, shelves erected, the table set. Our old friend my camp arm-chair was one of the first signs of a new order; it was my little reading lamp, purchased in Newcastle which shone upon our cold darkness; and most important of all it was my little saucepan - my Tommy's cooker which ultimately produced hot soup for supper. How proud I was & am! Ultimately we spread our valises on the floor & lay upon them, with little enough hope of sleep; until unexpectedly, with a heart-rending series of jolts our journey ended; and that being so

we did no more nor less than remain just where we
lay till morning - & some of us slept.

wednesday

There seem to be great difficulties at present about
letters; but this night to get away to-day
and we expect a mail to-morrow.

I have no time to write more now. Am
really quite busy in small ways. Our
prospects are not unpleasing. No then seem
to be fighting very hard at - about
Cambrai.

Great love to you dearest

Yours lovingly George

Would you mind sending a p.c. to M.G.
Street St London & ask them to send out
their London edition to this address. Also
I like to have lit. Sups.

