

Dec. 19. 1918.

My dearest Ruth, I must send you my Xmas wishes to-night or they may not reach you for the Day. Firstly my love to you, in fullest measure, mounting like a beautiful tide to lap you all round & embrace you tumultuously, strong enough & deep enough to cover the space between us. Secondly my love to your lovely children to mingle with yours & shine radiantly upon their lives to make them good and happy. And thirdly I wish for you love for our brothers & sisters (in the Christian sense) & their love, & love of Truth & Beauty to make your life beautiful & noble, and 'the peace of God which passeth all understanding.' And so there is no need to add happiness for you. /

I am writing in my newly-found chamber. This is a very curious house & reflects in one way the least pleasant side of French character. All the rooms on the ground floor this side (of which I inhabit that which is furthest from the apartments used by the concierge & his wife) open onto a vast glazed porch. The entrance to this is by a double door & it is otherwise, apparently, hermetically sealed, so that the approach of fresh air has been guarded against with the utmost care. You may imagine how I hate this circumstance. But it has a compensating advantage; - as the fireplace has no grate it is impossible to light a fire & one is accordingly

grateful for an alleviation of cold; this kind of air is certainly warmer than the fresh sort & though I can't pretend to be comfortably warm I have sat here for the best part of two hours writing letters without being frozen - and it is a cold night. Anyway I'm very pleased with my cell - it gives me the required opportunities for a hermit & I ask no more. True, I have yet to try the bed, but it looks comfortable enough though I would gladly burn the canopy. I shall be able to spend a good deal of time here if I can sacrifice the pleasures of the fireside; the obstacles will be occasional duties as orderly officer & a French class which I am about to start for a few men; beyond that & a Christian modicum of sociability and exercise I shall be free to work. It remains to be seen whether I shall be able to write under these conditions.

Morning. The bed was comfortable, & now that I have warmed it I hope it will be less damp in future. I believe there is some fresh air in this room after all, though how it finds its way in & out remains a mystery. I am going to finish off some Xmas letters this morning. Among others I must send a greeting to Mary - I wish I knew for certain where she is; I wonder if you have sent a greeting to her? It was quite a happy time at Ribbet Cottage wasn't it? I must send a line to Mary Ann too - I'm still feeling annoyed that we should have hurried them out of the Holt, but it wasn't our

fault, & I'm inclined to think it was Fletcher's; if he had made inquiries at the W.O. he could probably have found out that all questions of demobilisation would be taken out of their hands as soon as an armistice was signed; & if he had really pushed he could quite well have applied for us before the armistice & left us to refuse if ~~the~~ war went on. I must say I entirely agree with you that he can have no excuse for not letting us know at once that the arrangement had fallen through.

I'm very glad you are getting on so well about servants; I hope they will prove to be as good as they sound. I suppose wages have risen in their case as in others. £35 sounds to me rather a lot, though I'm sure it's worth while to pay a few pounds extra to secure good servants - at least it will be a lot if prices for clothes etc descend to something like their prewar rates.

I have had no answer as yet from Paris about the picture; I do hope I shall secure it. I expect I shall be able to pay for it out of my balance from Cox's. I wonder what you intend to do about the garden at the Holt? I mean, what labours do you think of getting for I suppose you don't contemplate doing it all yourself?

I think I was perhaps too pessimistic when

I wrote saying that I expected it would take 9 months to be demobilised. It may take all that, but I expect there are good chances that it won't. I was wrong about the Industrial Group Number - it signifies nothing as regards order; or I should find myself coming after gravediggers, undertakers & open grinders not to mention a host of more or less useless people in luxury trades etc. So be cheerful my darling & find out all you can -

On my marble mantelpiece are two photos of you & one of Clare; it gives me great pleasure to look at them; I never nailed them up above my bed in the truck because I thought they would be damaged.

Dear one you are wonderfully beautiful; I send you a thousand sweet kisses. Please give special Xmas kisses to the children from me & tell them how sorry I am not to be with them. My love to your father & Mildred & Marjorie & the Lawrence Turners & the Howes Turners - what a wonderful Xmas it will be for these last!

All my love & blessing, to your dear self.

Your loving George.

