

some arrangements made by which we could get our letters in the morning also. I'm certain the Germans have three or four deliveries in a day.

My company Officer is a very stupid man, he is constantly sending my letters back, and says that they would shock and sadden the censor, who is already sufficiently depressed. That is why I am using green envelopes.

While I write this to you, dear Mother, the sky is dark with the bullets that fly over head. Shells are falling all around us. I just smile at them. I am constantly drenched in the blood of the brave men who are dying all a around me. The noise is of course maddening.

We have almost no artillery and what there is, is constantly being hit by the Germans who are much superior to us. Our artillery is constantly killing our own men, and we are always terrified when our guns open fire.

Our artillery although it is bad is not as bad as the engineers. They are quite incapable. They take us out on work parties and we dig trenches under a hail of bullets. By this means alone we lose hundreds of valuable lives every night. It would be so much easier and safer todig the trenches 3 or 4 miles further back. I pointed this out to one of the engineers officers a few nights ago, but he was quite rude in his remarks to me.

Our staff must be very incapable. There are spies all over the country, the engineer officers are always seeing them and being shot at. Belgian farmers wander about at night, behind our lines, lighting their pipes and by so doing, signal across to the German lines many miles away. The spies also signal by means of windmills, this especially on windy days.

Carrier pigeons are constantly flying over our lines, my captain who is very ignorant, says these are wood pigeons. Dogs with messages tied to their necks are constantly running through between our trenches occasionally some jumping over the parapet, but our men are so stupid they allow these dogs to go right across to the German trenches.

We have quite lost the command of the air. I dont think we ever had it. Our aeroplanes are constantly getting lost and fly all over the German lines and get fired at by the Germans air guns. The splinters of shell fall upon our men below and by this means alone thousands of our troops have been killed. The German air service is much better arranged. Their aeroplanes never come over our lines at all, thereby showing how much better their maps are than ours. If our air guns fire at them, they at once come to ground so that none of their infantry get hit by the fragments of shell. By this alone the Germans save the lives of thousands of their soldiers.

Our transport is very bad. The men are brave enough but the officers are careless and stupid. At the battle of Ypres the transport were forced to bring us our food every day, through a terrific fire. Imagine my dear Mother the cruelty of endangering the lives of all those horses and men when the whole matter could have been arranged by simply ordering our troops to fall back six or seven miles.

I hope dear Mother I shall continue to do my duty as I always have with the most fearless bravery. When the shells are dropping around me I just smile at them.

I got the parcel all right. For a wonder it only took two days to come, and I am glad to have the sleeping socks, night cap and the chest protector. The silk respirator looks very well when I wear it, the forget-me-nots and roses are so beautifully worked.

I wish this awful war would stop. We are evidently no match for the Germans. Surely we could pay them to stop fighting and give them Canada or India Australia or some part of the colonies to keep them quiet.

Even although I am quite fearless I have applied for a position in the divisional train as good men are wanted there, and although it is much safer I feel my duty lies there.

I do not expect to be alive when I write next, but even if I am killed I shall continue to do my duty.

Your loving son,
Algernon Percival De Vere Devereaux.

July 1915.

Muddlesborough,
Shropshire.

My darling Boy,

I received your letter. I quite agree with you, this awful war is too terrible, but although it is frightful in Flanders it is much worse over here.

We are now expecting an invasion. The Germans may come any day. Our fleet is quite incapable of preventing a landing, in fact they seem to have got lost, nobody knows where they are. Of course the Germans know exactly where

they are their secret service is so much better than ours is. I think the German submarines are wonderful, so much better than ours. They have driven our fleet from the seas and are now starving us out.

Food is now at famine prices and I do not know what I shall do to meet this extra expence Your poor dear father is nearly distracted with all these terrible happenings, around us He joined the national defence force but was only made a captain and so ofcourse had to resign. He couldn't be expected to take orders from that upstart Colonel Gogarty who has spent all his life fighting Afridis or some kind of black creatures in South Africa Think of the humiliation of a "Gogarty" giving orders to a De Vere-Devereaux. Ofcourse your father has never being a soldier, but being an Oxford and a Cambridge man he was bound to know the proper way to do everything. In the end your father got Doctor Villiers, he is really one of the Montmorenay Villiers only a younger branch of thee family to certify that his heart was not all right, and that he had poor circulation in his feet.

As your poor father now is practically a chronic invalid he leaves everything more to me. I am so worried I dont know what I shall do next. The way the lower classes have behaved during this war is terrible.

Nichol the chauffeur, you will remember, was so selfish as to leave last October and actually enlisted in some Motor Ambulance or Transport. Fortunately we were so lucky as to get a thoroughly reliable man in his place, Fritz Offenbach. He is so thoroughly English and so polite that we have arranged to call him Harry Lauder at his own request until the war is over. This will save us a lot of trouble from the authorities who as are exceedingly fussy at present. Fritz is very much interested in the Welsh Coal Strike and as since your poor father's illness we require the car so seldom, I have permitted Fritz to take it over to South Wales on several occasions as he wishes to use his influence towards getting the men to return to work.

I am nearly distracted at the way in which the gardeners have behaved. They have been most selfish. Groggins the head gardener enlisted in the Army Service Corps. Higgins has joined the Shropshire Light Infantry, although he has flat feet false teeth and thirteen children. Spiggins has joined the cavalry, he was always lazy, and seems to have broken off his engagement with the under-housemaid, who I am bound to say has all along behaved very well and did her best to prevent his going. Jiggins also when I was nearly prostrated with a bad attack of nerves, suddenly announced his intention of enlisting and is now in the Veterinary or Medical Department, I dont know which but I imagine they are practically the same.

As a result of the want of consideration on the part of the gardeners, I have had to choose between closing the hot houses or allowing the kitchen garden to run to seed. Of course in your father's delicate condition it is essential that he gets his hot house grapes for dinner every night, we have therefore allowed the kitchen garden to run to seed. As you know it is large enough to supply the whole village with fruit and vegetables but I consider my duty to your father is plain.

But this my dear son is not the worst, Jorrocks has suddenly given notice. Said he was unable to polish the family plate when he ought to be polishing a rifle. Such flat feet too, and the cook tells me varicose veins, these I have naturally not seen how the cook knows I cant imagine This last blow has nearly prostrated your poor father. The table maid is so stupid that she cant bring up the port without shaking it and your poor father has had to go to the cellar and carry it upstairs himself. This in his present condition is almost more than he can stand But dear Dr. Villiers who was at dinner last night says port is essential and actually advised your father to get up a second bottle. Dr. Villiers is a great believer in port wine and he certainly drank several glasses last night. I counted eight myself before I retired.

Since Miss Satupon, my companion, left on her ridiculous mission of sick nursing your dear sisters have been more than dutiful. Berenice Veronique is president of a guild for knitting Balaclava Helmets and warm waistcoats for our troops in Central Africa, Cordelia Cecilia is on the committee of a society for sending acid drops to the troops in the trenches.

I am sorry your Colonel does not see his way to recommending you for a commission. He must be very inappreciative of the brave way in which you have always behaved.

I am worried to death with your father's health, the behaviour of the servants and the cost of food. You are quite right in your suggestion. It would be much more sensible to pay the Germans to stop fighting.

Your affectionate Mother,
Clorinda Helena.