Tuesday, Nov. 14, 1916.

Dear Dad:

We are having a nice quiet morning and I am very glad of it, for I had a long day yesterday as forward observing officer, and the novelty of being so close to all the fuss, combined with a long walk in the dark misty night across shell holes and corpses rather tired me out. I slept from 10 p.m. till 8.30 a.m. this morning and am feeling a new man. The observing is most fascinating. Our O. P. (observation post) is about two miles from the battery in an old trench just behind the second line, and a fair distance from the German trenches. The way there is across the old battle-field which is nothing but a mass of loose earth, and where a path has been worn eighteen inches thick in mud. Not an inch of earth that has not been upturned is left, and in places the shell holes are twelve feet deep, and filled with putrid mud and occasionally with a corpse at the bottom. All kinds of abandoned equipment lies everywhere, and on every sky-line rifles stick in the mud with bayonets tied across them to indicate a grave or mark the path which the infantry take for their trenches. The old trenches which on an ordinary front would be used as communication trenches are now nearly level with the ground and offer very little cover. The observation post itself is at the mouth of an old German dug-out which is 30 feet deep and will resist almost any ordinary shelling. In front the broken parapet has been built up and a rifle propped against the mud wall makes a seat on which the observer can sit and watch proceedings. I was there the day before yesterday in the afternoon, and in spite of it being rather misty we could see the German lines and villages fairly distinctly, with our shells bursting on and over them.

Yesterday I went up, as Brigade forward observing officer with three signallers. I spent the day there and was relieved in the evening by another officer from our own battery, as my major, the battery commander, thought that the whole thirty hours was rather long for me until I became more used to shelling. It was very misty and I saw scarcely anything of interest, except a barrage which the Germans put up over a party of infantry, which was leaving the trenches. It was wonderful to see how little effect such a dangerous looking fire had upon them, for they luckily were just out of it in time. One or two stragglers were left behind, but I think they took shelter safely in shell holes, for I saw them afterwards come across the open as hard as they could run.

The dugouts are splendid, and once when I retired into them the shells which came near had not the least effect. There are two stairways so that if one entrance is blown in the other one remains. Of course the doors face the wrong way, as they were built against our own shells, but a high parapet in front gives a good protection. The whole O. P. is really very comfortable and safe.

I have not really had a chance of doing any sketches, but I am going to make a good attempt for they will be interesting afterwards, even if I don't want a reminder at present.

We have no doctor at present, for he was killed about two weeks ago and his place has not been filled. Below the mess in a dugout is a dressing station with two R. A. M. C. orderlies who attend to anyone who needs attention.

So glad Bob is back! how glad they must be to see him. Please tell Muz that I do not want the waterproof leggings, as we are going in to rest

so soon, and cannot carry anything but bare necessities, besides I have so much riding now, and my coat keeps me quite dry. Also, please, don't send any more books, as I really have not a moment to read them, nor any room to carry them. If you could see the place where the three of us sleep you would realize what few conveniences we have to indulge in our civilized occupation.

I had my clothes off and put on clean ones for the first time since I joined the battery. I get a good wash and shave every morning, and none of us are lousy, so we are quite well off. Thank you so much for sending the Dan A. I wish I had time to read it. Please thank Muz for the writing pad which came this evening. Ask her to send one of Mrs. Parsons' cakes, we would love it in the mess. Several letters came from you and Muz yesterday. They had been forwarded from the D. A. C. I was very amused to hear you had been smoking a cigar! So glad you like the Southhampton books. Oh! that I could sit and read them at home! Really the Walton Lives is a beauty.

I am very fortunate to have come to such a good battery. There are four officers besides myself, Major Bachelor, Cluttenbuck, Taraner, and Lawrence. The three last are all . The major is a regular, very outspoken and frank, and I expect competent, quite agreeable, and I admire and will get to like him. Cluttenbuck I don't see much of, as he is at the waggon lines holding a not very exalted place in the major's estimation. Taraner is my own age, and was a term at Cambridge in 1914 before he joined. He has been through the Gallipoli and Egypt campaigns, and though a temporary officer, is a keen soldier and fine type of fellow. Lawrence is another civilian, from New Zealand, and though not quite such a good type of man as

the others is both a good officer and a pleasant companion. I am sure I will be very happy among them. Thank God! It means more than I could have imagined. I had no idea what confidence one gains from one's fellows in a time like this, until the other day.

I would be so interested to see Mr. Sales' book(Ages of Man). Perhaps when we go into rest and get comfortably settled in billets I will be able to have it sent. Couldn't you get him to give me a copy himself?

Rumours of going out of action are very frequent, and today Lawrence has been detailed to go on as town major of the place where we rest, somewhere near Cressy. I hope from there I will be able to get up to Boulogne and see McGill again. I am just going out to fire a few salvoes, and then to bed if nothing else turns up. Goodnight, and much love to all.

Your loving son,

REVERE.