

3A Answer

My dear Charles,

At your urging I am continuing to decypher my Uncle's will. His statement that "the danger did not end with the war" is somewhat alarming. Was it his intention to suggest that I am at some risk? Could his actions during the war really be posing a danger to me after all this time? It is clear that we will have to complete the decryption if we are to understand.

I did not encounter VERONA during the war, and have heard nothing about it during my exile here on Malta, but I think it might be time to make discrete enquiries about it in London. Would you oblige me in this?

One other thing. Almost certainly I am jumping at shadows, but my landlady remarked that over the last week or so she has noticed two men loitering in the neighbourhood of my apartment. I cannot believe that this is connected with my Uncle's will, but his warning has alarmed me and I have engaged the assistance of a local detective to keep watch.

I take your point about securing our communications. Tiberius is clearly more concerned to secure these later sections of the document as well, and I had to work hard to break the keyword cypher he used here. Returning to the wartime convention of five letter blocks really does add to the security of the text, and I had to carry out frequency analysis on this section of the will. I suggest that in the future we too use the wartime convention. I think that with this precaution the affine shift cypher should afford us sufficient security in our letters to one another.

Yours,

Nicholas

3B Answer

The effect of the gas attack on morale was catastrophic and the generals over-reacted. Terrified that the front line positions would break up they sent young officers to hold the line and prosecuted deserters with ferocity. I thought I had seen the worst that war could offer in the hospitals treating the terrified victims of the gas, but the firing squads were worse, and I was sent by VERONA to witness one. I realize now that their intention was to frighten me. My reports on the first gas attack made clear my loathing for this new type of warfare and they needed to find ways to pressure me to work on the development of our own weapon.

The young subaltern had fled the trenches as the gas rolled along them. He had urged the others to run too, and that added to his guilt in the eyes of the court martial. He was sent to the firing squad and VERONA chose to use his death as a warning to me. Their plan might have backfired if I had chosen to blame our generals for this savage treatment of young and frightened men, but instead, in my anger following the attack at Ypres, I chose to blame the enemy for this death too and finally agreed to lead a team working on gas weapons.

I can't forgive myself for what happened later, and it is clear that, standing by the firing squad in the cold dawn, I made the worst decision of my life. The young man stood alone and brave and he reminded me of you. We had stopped you from joining the army once, but soon you would be sixteen and we would not be able to prevent you joining the regiment then. I convinced myself that by hastening the end to the war I would save many lives, and I might save you.

All sides in that terrible conflict were engaged in a desperate search for a new weapon to break the deadly stalemate of trench warfare but even if things had turned out differently it would be still hard to say that I made the right decision that morning. I will understand if you can't forgive me, but as you will later see things were to become far more complicated and dangerous for us both and I am sorry to say that the danger did not end with the war