

June-7-1918-

My dear Mary B.

When I was fortunate and lucky enough to have been put on this forward School Contingent by Colonel Cox I never dreamed that the trip would be one that I could look back upon all my life as being as good a one as any body could wish. For several weeks it was as if we were on a pleasure trip with permission and privilege to go and come as we please. Of course this was made possible because we had no troops to look

out for. It is needless
to say that I have taken
full advantage of it as
I have been cooped up so
long in that quiet
and boring locality around
Camp.

I have
always been strong for
the "go" and "push" of the
outside world and I have
had it to my heart's content.
And in addition to my
natural desires along
this line I have been a
soldier long enough to have
learned "to take my fun
where I've found it."

Since arriving
here however, I have
attempted to address myself
as closely as I could
to ^{The} work at hand for all
of us realize that we
have a man's job to perform

and therefore must master thoroughly the knowledge of the art of war in order to "acquit ourselves like men" when we are called upon.

For the first few days I became very much discouraged, as I was beginning to think that I was not going to master these things so thoroughly - so quickly did these French officers shoot this strange and unfamiliar stuff at us, but I am now beginning to feel that I am absorbing some of it and possibly after awhile will make a fair student. But it is hard, very

hard - it is all so different from ours. - all these maps, plotting boards and other geographical and geodetic apparatuses and apparatus are things I have never known anything about.

I have many dozens of times wished that you could enjoy this country with me. It is now just in the middle of spring and the landscape is something wonderful. There are ^{wooden} no fences in France. But along the hard, white roads are dirt or stone embankments about 4 feet high and 3 feet thick, hundreds and hundreds of years old. These are of course covered with verdure and ^{all} along their lower edges

there are millions of the daintiest little wild flowers of all kinds. Great red poppies line either side of the roadway and in most cases giant Lombardy poplars in even straight lines are between the road itself and the hedgerows. Every day the little French boy who waits on our table picks several vases of these little wild flowers for us. They love flowers and everywhere you go you find flowers of some kind on the table. It seems to us a privilege to do our part towards saving this beautiful country for these beautiful people.

It is very nice to be able to say that the Americans have made a great hit with the French. A tchaki uniform is all the recommendation needed. They appear astounded at the great amount of money the Americans have and the lavish way they spend it. Of course you know that normally things here are on a much lower basis than at home - in fact a franc or 20 c went as far as our gallery and they marvel at the ease with which we spend 5 or 6 francs for a dinner, (which before the war was probably 2 francs) and appear so satisfied.

I have found very

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few important things
over here higher than
in America - for instance
shoes and all leather goods
are probably $\frac{1}{3}$ higher and
not as good as ours so I
was fortunate in
having brought enough
of footwear to last
a long time but
clothes are some
cheaper than at
home and appear
to be of better quality.
Of course the prices
and conditions I have
mentioned refer to the
parts of the country
not immediately near the
war areas. The government
has provided for our
comfort in bringing
over necessities that the

French do not have -
for instance all kinds
of smoking and chewing
tobacco, razor-blades, &
toilet articles can be
bought right in this
Camp from the Commissary
for $\frac{1}{2}$ the price we
pay in America.

Of course we
do not know how long
we will remain here
but I am quite sure
that as long as we
are in the army in
France we will not
be so pleasantly
situated. When we
rejoin our Regiment we
will be billeted in
small villages - probably
one or two men in a
town and there it
will not be so luxurious

for unfortunately the custom in these little Country Villages is that the family - the horse, the cow, chickens and goats all live under one roof. Of course there is a wall, however, between the people and the animals. If by chance we officers can be assigned to the home of some well-to-do people we will not have to become so intimate with animal and insect life.

It was very nice to have received yesterday two letters from home - the first since reaching this side. One was from Uncle Dick that was dated April 27 and originally was sent to Camp, then to the port

of embarkation and
forwarded to me over
here. Please thank
him for Mrs. Tuttle's address.
I will certainly keep it
and look her up if I
should go there. The other
letter was from Papa
dated May 6 and forwarded
from N. J. While these
letters have been written
sometime, nevertheless I was
so glad to get them.

I hope that
everything at home is
about as usual. I think
so often of you and wish
that I could be there
with you all but I
am quite sure that you
would rather have
me take a part (however
small) in this great
enterprise upon which

our Country has embarked,
 I cannot help but feel
 that you would rather
 have me really in France
 than just merely in
uniform. America
 is going to win this
 war. Already hundreds
 and hundreds of
 thousands of soldiers
 in khaki are in France
 and they continue to
 pour in. It will
 take hundreds and hundreds
 of thousands more to
 join these and it will
 require some months to
 get them over here
 but when our entire
 army has been completed
 and prepared can the
 war-worn troops of
 Germany stop these business-

like and ambitious young
men? They are over here
to finish up the war
and to get back home
to their people and business
and when everything is
ready and they are given
the word it will be all
open. But it will take
hundreds and hundreds
of thousands and many many
weeks, and probably months
before that time comes.

Please write to me
often and also see about
having the Albemarle
Observer sent to me - also
the Norfolk paper for
a while. It is a great
help to receive a card
or even a paper from
America.

With devoted love
Richard
H RIDDON 113th FA

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