

Centros, 4 August.

Dearest Father:

Your letter of yesterday, dated 14 July, says you haven't received my first letter. I do hate to think you had to wait so long. I mailed my first letter from Bordeaux on the 21 June, and the second from Paris only a few days later. I mailed them just with ordinary French stamps, so perhaps that accounts for the delay. I didn't know about the American P.O. service until after that. I am so sorry for your long wait! Mine seemed bad enough at this end; but it was only about three weeks after I landed - not that, I guess - and now letters are coming through pretty regularly.

I sha'n't get my day off this week, because we have a Y conference here on Tuesday; and Monday will, of course, be crammed with "reading up." I'll fill in all cracks to-day though, so you'll get this as usual.

It's been a pretty full week. This running a hut on your own is lots of fun; but without sufficient help it's a little like trying to make bricks without straw. So I've delivered the bricks, but I've put in an S.C.S. for help and Mr. Randall is trying to get me a detail. Marie and I have done practically the whole thing this week, from cleaning to selling. You see Mr. Flemming used to take a part of the selling, at least, and we had a man for the heavy work of cleaning, opening boxes, etc.; but a few days after Mr. F. left the man got sick. We managed this week, but had a couple of soldiers for selling. One still stands by, but the most useful left for the front in the middle of the week. Miss Wooster came to help, but was utterly inefficient and left after a couple of days. (She didn't leave because she was inefficient exactly - she just lacked gray matter to an alarming extent. Her Waterloo was something quite outside of my affairs.)

I've had to give up cooking until I get a man as a steady worker. There is hope for him every day, but he hasn't turned up yet. I hate to do it, too, for the boys like our things. We sell cakes, chocolate and drinks almost exclusively. The town Y is strong in tobacco, soap, etc. Little Suzanne has helped make up a lot of chocolate cracker-sandwiches, so we haven't yet had to turn any one away; but I'm hoping for help soon. One soldier said the other day, "Say, I've written to my mother all about your cakes and the things you make up here. I told her it wasn't no stepping into the kitchen and turning on the gas range neither!"

Such little things please them! A couple of men arrived at about 11 o'clock the other morning from a camp a few miles away. The tent looked like distress: we were putting around cleaning up, and a painter was painting the benches; and we were all mussed up generally. The boys wanted some hot chocolate and crackers, and I gave them the victrola. They were awfully pleased. I heard one of them say (I was at the other end of the tent, so he didn't say it to be overheard) "Seems more like home than anything I've seen since" - and it's just a big, rather dirty (over since we blew down) sometimes gloomy, always mussy tent. Really, to find a thing like that homelike is pathetic.

I'm a good deal encouraged about our future prospects, though. I've had the counter shelves painted a bright red. With the white oilcloth top and counter, that is quite gay. All the tables and benches are green - so that the constantly spilled ink won't show. Best of all, two men arrived day before yesterday to fix up a little dynamo and fit us up with electric lights. That will be perfectly grand, for you simply can't light a big tent with candles. I wish you could have seen it last night - candles on the counter and on the few tables which were dry enough for the boys to write on, candles on the piano - and great gulfs of blackness in between. We had quite a lot of men last night, and they crowded around the piano and sang as if we had all the light in the world. Some others ran a rival concert with the victrola on the other side of the room, and out in the grove the band crashed away - we could only hear it above our own "music" at intervals. But I loved it. Whenever the men start singing I adore it, bad as it often is. It sounds so gay.

Last Thursday the Y accountant came to collect our cash. He comes every week, but this was the first time I'd had the re-