

14th Letter

Contres (L et C)  
15 August

Dearest Father:

At last I've received your letter saying you've received my first. What a long wait! If I have to wait two weeks for a letter from you over here I get all cross and horrid. And you had to wait about six. I tell you I was glad last night when I heard you'd got mine. Now you ought to get them right along. I've written about three times every two weeks pretty regularly I think.

The plot thickens. Apparently they think they've got to have someone at St. Aignan and Miss Neff has been summoned. She's the one who has been running the town "Y" here and whom I - well I'm fonder of Serena. She went off yesterday in a very top loftical manner declaring she wouldn't stay. She'd probably be back by evening, she was paying her own expenses and so of course she need not do anything she didn't like. She said of course she had so much pull that she could be placed anywhere she chose - of course for the first assignment she had preferred to let the Paris office send her where she wanted but that now she would tell them where she wanted to go. And of course the boys from her Club in New York were besieging her with letters begging her to come to their place (she wasn't sure where that was but she could find out) and anyway she didn't want this work of work, she had managed a very large household at home and hadn't come over for more of that sort of thing. She wanted time to "get down to brass tacks" with the boys, to talk about "the things that count". Oh I'm learning lots from Miss Neff! Mostly negatives. She advised me the other day not to work very hard, said if I made too good they'd probably shift me to some harder job - said it didn't pay.

You do find queer types over here. How they get past the New York office I've not an idea. They've sent another woman out here now to take Miss Neff's job, a poor, old, white haired, expressionless, monotonous old maid. She's been shipped from pillar to post all around the Division. Everyone says she's a good old soul, but hinders more than she helps. When I'm so -well, of course, I'll think I'm not like that anyway.

And my word! how we do need real workers. Fleumer Doty is doing grand service at St. Aignan and there are others here who are making good, but the Division is full of dead wood. I'm awfully interested in developments at the Headquarters but I may never hear of them, but I think I shall - and I fancy there will be some hair pulling before its over.

Its a little like a fairy tale - one after the other the king's sons (only its daughters) venture into the enchanted palace. I got out safely even though I was first instead of the magic third, but its going to be interesting to know if the dragon swallows the second - and who will be the third.

There's little to write of just now. Its oppressively hot, but looks tonight as though a thunder storm might break the heat.

The most exciting thing that even happens here is when we send off a group of soldiers. A lot went off last night at about seven o'clock. When the boys go out they are assembled in the square and all the town turns out to watch and chatter. The men who aren't to go wander up and down the lines shaking hands and slapping backs. The officers gather in little groups, the colonel wanders around, the village children run between everybody's legs and play in the empty spots. Then the band strikes up, the boys fall in and off they go down the street, across the bridge, and out of sight - singing, whistling and cheering, as gay a group as you can imagine. They cheer when they pass a favorite sergeant, they smile and wave to me, and I - well I don't know that I can watch them off much more, its more difficult each time not to cry, and as the last boy rounds the corner and the people break into the street I grab my bicycle and steer viciously through the crowd, hoping my face doesn't look the way I feel. If only they weren't so gay about it, it would be easier to stand. And they know pretty well what it is they are going to do, for we have a lot of men back from the front full of stories. Oh our boys are grand!