

29 August

She tells me all about her family- they live within a mile of the Front, but when I ask why they stay, Felicie shrugs her shoulders and says "where would they go". The mother is very old, Felicie hasn't seen her for years, and the sister makes bead embroideries- the kind McCreery's counters are full of. I always thought them machine made, but apparently they're not. F. gave me some the other day.

Last of all comes one of the nicest things of the day- a real scrubby bath in the little tiled room next Felicie's (Don't laugh Frie). Do you remember what a peanut Miss Dunn's little rubber tub looked in my big room at home! I can hardly believe it's the same tub over here, it's so capacious. When I was at St. Agnan one of the things that impressed me most was how all the people spoke of the difficulty in keeping clean. As I splash hot water and get wet all over at once - not just damp in progressive spots- I realize how spoiled I am here in Coutres and wonder if, for the good of my soul, I ought not volunteer for St. Agnan.

On late nights I miss "Tap" but sometimes I'm in bed in time to listen. It's a very lovely ending of a good day. It comes at 11-30 and when we are full of troops it lasts nearly five minutes. A bugle far away will start- so far I'm not sure it's not imagination- then one nearby calls clearly, then another and another. I counted it eight times over one night, the last so far away I think I dreamt it. Pretty soon I'm dreaming anyway- and that brings me back to where I started. I hope all this description is detailed enough to please Antilla. When you think of all the things going on at the Front at this moment and of the excitement of every newspaper, it seems both stupid and criminally egotistical to write such a letter as this "from France", but do remember my dear people that while I'm nearer the events in actual mileage you are much nearer in information, and besides there's always the Censor. I hear stories all the time from returned boys about the things they've seen at the Front, but that's censorable in the first place, and in the second it's just about what you can read in any battle description in any newspaper. The difference is, of course, that when you're getting it at first hand from the man himself it's a thousand times more thrilling.

I am more and more satisfied that uninteresting as this little town seems its really pretty thrilling work we're trying to do. Often the boys go straight from here to the trenches- and farther. I gave some outgoing men some tobacco a little while ago and when the sergeant who took them up came back he told me how much they'd enjoyed it- "only of course, some of them never got the chance". We seem very far away from it all, very safe, very commonplace, very unimportant, but for some of the men at least it's their last bit of home. I grow increasingly glad to be in this particular place in spite of its uneventfulness. So please don't mind stupid letters or feel that I'm not doing all the things you wanted me to do.

Dear love to you all. Next time I'll tell you about my new mess- for its lots of fun- and about typical tent evenings.

Very lovingly,

(Signed) Mildred.

P.S: Please everybody, write to me.