

Dearest Father:

This is going to be a stupid letter for nothing has been happening since I last wrote you, so if you decide not to send it around, all right. You see I write more for my own pleasure in talking to you than in expectation of your pleasure in reading it.

Since I've literally nothing to write about today I think I'll take Antella's advice and tell you all the stupid little things. Father will like them anyway.

Well-- suppose I begin at midnight. I'm asleep, of course, but equally, of course, dreaming wild dreams. Swashbuckling, to say the least. I was Mary, Queen of Scots once, and Napoleon a little later. In both cases I created history! Often I wake suddenly, thinking I'm in the tent or some other strange place, and I can't account for the darkness and the position of my bed until I sit up and pull my wits together. Often I dream I'm home again, but it's never a very happy dream, for I'm always filled with a sense of unfulfilled work, and I struggle to get back to France. The first thing that really happens is an alarm clock in the room next mine which at 5:30 turns out my neighbor sergeant but simply tells me to go to sleep again. If I don't obey at once I hear reveille from all sides far off and near. Then Kipling's lines run through my head: "Early at dawn, ere men see clear, they stumble into his terrible stall" and off I go to sleep until about 8 or 8:30. Mr. Ripley's "Black Knight" makes that possible and I bless its inventor many times.

When I finally do rouse, I see my little gray room, fundamentally orderly because of Felecia, superficially untidy because of me; and my long, open French window with the tree tops outside cooling the edge of a hot blue sky. Dressing? As usual except as few clothes as possible. Until this heat wave I've stuck to my uniform but just at present anything woolen is unsupportable, so I take to gingham. Usually, though, it's blue waist and gray skirt--rapidly turning brown-- white or blue collar, according to how many are in the wash, and same old blue crocheted tie. I munch sweet crackers while I'm dressing and add a malted milk tablet if I'm extra late or extra hungry.

I think it's hot in the house, but as I go down the red carpeted stairs and open the front door the real glare of the sun on the stone steps strikes me and I know the house is cool. The trees here-- in our grounds-- are magnificent though and I like the tiny walk to the cobwebby woodshed where I keep my bicycle. Then out the big white iron gates, over a two inch river, past a rather slumming quarter, past peasants with wheelbarrows or high two wheeled wagons whose floors are about level with the backs of their tiny horses or donkeys, past soldiers sitting at the tops of ladders leading up to their second story billets, past children who call out to me, past the Town "Y" the Headquarters, the Town Hall, the public square, until in less time than it takes to tell it I reach the "Lion d'Or" and breakfast.

I leave the bicycle next door, in a big empty blacksmith's shop. A great, cool picturesque place, a splendid "Siegfried" stage setting, bellows and all. No one is in the dingy little hotel hall when I push open the door, so I poke my head into a little back room and find Jeanne or Antoinette shuffling round in carpet slippers, pretending to dust, and then I go say good morning to Madame in the kitchen and eventually I get a bowl of something brown which goes by the name of coffee and some rye bread which has been cut in chunks and laid on the top of the stove until the edges are burnt and the center is soggy. Lately I've struck for an egg too, so I start my count of fried eggs for the day. One by one the various hotel habitués saunter past the door and say "good morning" and from the window I see the ducks and chickens in the court yard wallowing in dirty water and gobbling the remains of last night's beans. Often I forget my sugar-- you carry with you what you want but Jeanne has a private stock so I never have to go without.

After breakfast I find Marie at the tent and for the rest of the morning we mess around, make cakes, or get things in order or mix chocolate and chop lemons. Marie's greatest fault is that she cannot work and talk both at once and as she's an inveterate talker we don't ever get as much done as I'd like, yet somehow when the need arises there's usually the supply on hand.