

Contres
13 Sept. 1918.

Dearest Father,

Marching orders at last; I'm to move next week. They're really only stepping orders though for my next job is only about 8 miles away.

Between here and St. Aignan are two little villages, Condées and St. Romain; there's a Y tent in each but, I believe, only one secretary for both and he's going to leave. So Miss Summerville has asked me to take charge of them both. The villages are about 4 miles apart and the only transportation will be by bicycle (and mine's a very heavy old French affair) or a chance hitch on an army truck. I haven't an idea just what the work will be but I imagine it will be more executive and less domestic than my tent here has been. I know practically nothing of what I'm going to find to be done. I suppose I'll get a soldier as detail in each place and it will be up to me to see that he keeps it clean and waits on the counter. If there's no "wet" canteen I'll do my best to open it but of course baking is quite out of the question. I'll have charge of the money, probably after the present man leaves, and the question of supplies will be, of course, entirely up to me. I don't know whether anything else will or not, I don't know where I'm to eat or sleep or anything.

I am sorry to leave Contres, very sorry, and yet not as much as I would have been a month ago. I've had a feeling lately that the psychic moment for going was approaching. Just why, I can't say- I've no idea. Everything has gone on beautifully, without friction. Perhaps it's the series of new secretaries we've had- the whole "Y" tone has changed since I first came, except in my own little tent. Perhaps it's that I'm a little restless- all these newspaper accounts of the war stir you and make you restless; the men too, those who have to stay here more or less permanently find it pretty hard. Perhaps it's the feeling that when they build the new hut here I won't be needed. I don't know, only change is in the air and I've felt it for some time so it doesn't come so hard. I only wish it were more of a change. Since I must leave Marie and Mme. Brunet and the Chaplain and all my friends I'd like to try something much more exciting than a similar tent 8 miles down the road.

And so for the second time I leave the world I know and start fresh in a brand new world without a friend or a soul I know now in it.

15 Sept. (Sunday)

Nothing new yet. I'll telephone Miss Summerville tomorrow for definite orders. I'm glad it wasn't this week I was to go, for I haven't been feeling quite up to snuff for a couple of days. Just a touch of the famous "Spanish grippe" - just enough to let me say I've had it and so feel very fashionable, and it's all over now. I was good and went to see the doctor and he gave me a little medicine and seemed to think I'd live till morning. I lay off and did practically no work for a day or two (just kept the accounts) because I didn't want it to develop into anything real, and I got my reward - it didn't. Oh I was good, all right! I'd hate to be sick over here, so I took all possible precautions. It paid. I stopped in today at the doctor's for a final haul over and got a clean bill of health. Everyone's had it. I wonder if it will strike New York. I hope not, for it can have complications and it's a nuisance anyway. Our latest new secretary, Mr. Moore, has it now, I think, and two other people I know are just getting over it. One of them used a pretty vivid phrase to describe how thoroughly rotten he felt, "I feel like I'd been cubed for and couldn't come". My word! could anything be worse!

I stayed at home for a couple of days and Marie sent or came twice or three times each day with food for me. She was afraid I might not be hungry so she cooked nice little tapioca puddings, etc. Pretty sweet of her- but there's nothing whatever the matter with my appetite. However, I was awfully touched by her devotion. I broke the news to her tonight that I may have to leave and she was sweet. She wants to come too, even if it's to be for only a short time (she may be able to go home soon) but she says she'll stay here and run the tent if I want her to - unless they put Miss Neff in charge!

I cut regimental service short and took that time for a bicycle ride out into the sunset. It was simply heavenly.