

I passed a mounted M.P. beaming dreamily at the sunset "Believe me this is swell" was his comment.

You see my busiest hours are from 6:30 to 9:30 so this is only my third sunset since I've been here. I've missed the "country" part of the summer tremendously, though I've had the good luck to be out of doors most of the time. I'm going to spend next summer lying on my back in the woods, watching the sky- with all my summeriest clothes on- I'm so tired of my faded shrunk uniform.

I did get one game of tennis the other day. I just couldn't resist when I heard a soldier trying to find a partner. We hadn't much of a crowd and Marie handled them while I had one set. My! I enjoyed it! Our court here goes wop with a wabble between, like Kipling's ship; its half grass and half dirt and half sand and all hills and valleys and we've no back stops so every ball you don't stop goes either into my kitchen or past two fences into a vineyard, but who cares! It was heavenly just to feel a racket once more.

I told you I'd tell you about the "mess" here. Each company has its own, you know, so each isn't too big. I never get there for breakfast so I can't tell you about that. Our mess is down the street from the tent, and around a corner. You know you're coming to it by the men you overtake going there with their mess kits all handy! When you turn the corner, if you're a little late, you see the boys already at it, sitting on the curbstone or with their backs up against the wall, emptying a very well filled plate just as fast as they can put it away. If you're in good time you pass them all lined up, four abreast, the whole company deep, waiting for it to be ready. One hot day they put their mess kits on the ground to hold their places in the line, and they themselves sprawl in the shade until the time comes. It looks awfully funny to see the shiny little mess kits all drawn up in procession.

All this is not in the street, but in a big courtyard. The ranges are tucked away in one corner and the men sit all around to eat. We're frightfully esoteric - we of the officers' mess. We cross the courtyard, go under a ladder leading to a billet above, and arrive in the mess sergeant's room. It has a rough tiled floor, whitewashed walls and heavy rafters. His cot, covered with army blankets, is in one corner with a soap-box beside it covered with a bath towel and a Bible and a few other books. At the foot a couple more towel covered boxes make a clean, nice looking wash-stand, and he has made himself a pretty good box-desk too. At the other side of the room there is a narrow table covered with white oilcloth, with a wooden bench along each side; that's ours. Lieutenants May, Clark, Lawrence and Richards are always there, others come and go. The last two are awfully nice - I shall miss them a lot. All our "Y" people are there too - we're an awfully funny mixture. We eat from cracked white enameled ware with tin forks and spoons, no napkins, but it's all clean and pleasant. A couple of soldiers wait on us and then come to "second table" but as eating fast seems to be an army regulation I usually sit placidly through both tables - I jolly the officers first and the men last, I don't know which table I enjoy the most.

The food is well cooked and good. Beef, usually, but fixed up in different ways. "Corned Willie" sometimes, always lots of canned vegetables, bread, butter, jam and usually pie. Its a tremendous relief to get food promptly and of sufficient variety, after my hotel life, and I enjoy meals very much now, though always more when my two lieutenants are there than when they're not.

No description of anything here is complete without a few children thrown in, for they're omnipresent. They get tin cans and beg from the cooks. Each kitchen has its own contingent and ours has its fair share. Well, at least its nourishing stuff, so they won't come to much harm. Marie's 6 and 4 year old get fed there regularly. They refuse to go home for meals any more. Well - its cheaper for Marie!

With the ending of that description I feel as though I'd exhausted the possibilities of Contres. There isn't anything left to tell you about. I would have had to put in an application soon to move on the grounds of "nothing to write home about" which might not have been granted.