

Fifth Letter

Centres, L.J.C. France
18 July 1918

Dear Family:

"Business as usual during alterations" - that is about where we are just now. We had a norfol storm here night before last and it blew down all the "Y" tents in this part of the country, ours included. My word! it was some wind! I was awakened from dreaming of huge waves on a sea beach to find the trees before my window rocking and shrinking, while the lightning was incessant. You can guess how long it took me to close the window.

We have a man sleep in the tent every night, he was awakened by the storm and got out of bed to close the tent windows. The wind made it impossible to budge one so he calmly went back to bed. Just as he got there, there was a crash and a sigh and the big tent sat down, upsetting the piano and smashing some of its beams on the way. Luckily the bed is always set up in the open space between the high shelves and high counter neither of which were injured, so that Mr. Rhine was perfectly protected and slept through the rest of the night in a little tent instead of a big one. It must have been pretty dramatic though, at one minute a sense of space, even though absolutely black space, at the next, blackness of wreckage and pressure.

Next morning they rolled up the canvas and cleared out the props. It's going to take several days to get it all set up again. In the meantime Marie and I are entirely on our job and we serve punch, chocolate, lemonade and cookies "a les belles etoiles" We had rather hard luck yesterday for it was so piring hot that we kept having thunderstorms. We had to cook between showers. It wouldn't have been difficult if we'd had the shelter of the tent but without that it was -- well it was certainly amusing. Especially as we'd had such a run on punch the night before that our boiled water had given out and it's pretty difficult to get water which you boil in the mornings cool enough to be refreshing by the same evening when there's not a piece of ice within 18 miles. Marie rose to the emergency splendidly and stood big bottles of water in jars of fresh well water, etc. until it was really cool. And then, a half hour after we opened upon another big storm blew up and drove all our soldiers away! Well, it means that we've all that stuff for use this evening instead, so we were free to turn our hands to other things this morning and Marie showed me how to make fascinating cakes - a paste with jam inside. They're really jam turnovers and are very good. When we get our other oven (D.V.) and a few other things we'll be able to make a good deal more. We turned out only 48 this morning but they're quite big and one will go a long way. "Honey Moons" we're going to call them.

I've never seen anything much lovelier than that 8 o'clock storm last night. It was black all about us but the sun broke through beneath the clouds and turned golden a field of rye where the peasants in red caps were hurrying in the grain. Can you see that? Sheer gold against a storm cloud background, or rather one golden spot in a black landscape.