

May 10, 1918.

War

Dear Father,

Pardon this effusion of red ink - it's not Boche blood but it's all I can find at present.

We have just had our first real experience, and I wish I could tell you the hundred and one interesting details that went with it. I can assure you that I came through in fine shape as far as I can tell now, and am now ready for anything whatsoever - I make no exceptions or reservations. I had extremely good luck and I am copying a letter the Colonel was good enough to write me, just in the hope it will give you as much pleasure to read as it gave me to receive. I must tell you right away that without any undue modesty I was the recipient of the most amazing quantity of Dame Fortune's good graces. I haven't done anything wonderful, am not a hero, and desire you to be on your guard lest you give any such erroneous impression. As I say, I send it on just to please you and don't for Heaven's sake pass it out of the family or immediate circle. It runs as follows:

"Headquarters 18th Infantry,
France, May 8, 1918.

"From Commanding Officer 18th Infantry,
to: 2nd Lt. J. Palache, Co. E, 18th Inf.

"(Thru En. & Company Commanders)
Subject: Commendation

"The Regimental Commander has been informed on more than one occasion recently of the excellent zeal and efficiency shown by you in command of your platoon and he desires to express to you his appreciation of your efforts.

"The Infantry Platoon is the basic unit of the Army today, and the efficiency of the Infantry depends upon the efficiency of the Platoon essentially. Bear in mind always the great responsibility therefore that rests upon you, and continue the excellent record you are making for yourself. You will never be in any position again in which your work will be relatively more important than it is to-day.

Frank Parker,
Colonel 18th Infantry."

Isn't that name a strange coincidence?

Well, don't think my telling you about it so precipitously has turned my head, but half the glow it gave me was on your account and hence out it had to come.

I can't possibly thank you enough for the tremendous deluge of cigarettes that have lately come my way. You can't imagine how good they taste after these horrible English and French excuses. I wish you

could have seen me smoking those Deities. Never was there such a contrast between luxury and the opposite. I sat in the most horrible attempt at a dugout you ever saw or could ever imagine. The walls and roof dripped water continuously; the floor was so muddy and wet that I had to sleep on a bundle of brush, practically floating on the slush, and there was mud over clothes, equipment and person literally an inch thick. And there I sat calmly dipping into this dainty red box, and enjoying the choicest of civilization's offerings. Really I laughed aloud every time I took one, and they tasted all the better for their unsavory surroundings.

My! How I would like to be able to tell you all about it. Really we will never go through anything like it again, no matter what happens, and now that it's over I'm glad we went through it, but while it lasted ----- !

It would have insulted a second class hog to ask him to live where we spent two weeks, but the humor of it all saved the situation.

Besides the cigarettes, I had the most marvelous luck in mail while up there, getting about twenty or thirty letters from all over the country. For all of them, yours, Helen's, Jeannette's, Mary's, Alice's, Lullu's, Little Aunt Lida's, I cannot be thankful enough. None was very recent, but that made no difference. My joy in reading them was similar to that of Crusoe's on seeing a white man, and I hoarded them up like a miser, first devouring them all at once greedily and feverishly, then slowly a second time and so on. In other words, I smashed tradition, and had my pie and ate it.

You may hear about certain troops going home, but don't get your hopes up too high, because even if these I am with do return I doubt if we newcomers get a chance. The wildest guessing is all this amounts to.

I had a letter from John dated April 6th and no others. I begin to fear we cannot get in touch, and it is certainly exasperating. Of course, I won't give up trying though. He seems well, in good spirits, and what's far more important over here than anything else - busy.

I must close and get started on this infernal trench.

Heaps and heaps of love and thanks for the letters, cigarettes, and, by the way, gloves which I forgot to mention, but which arrived in fine shape - queer things for the front line.

Don't feel I'm unappreciative of the Lord Salisburys because I only mention Deities. They are simply great, also, and I like them heaps, but I harp on the Deities because they seem so much more of a treat.

Give my special love and thanks to Helen for her letters and tell her I'm more than proud of her record.

Devotedly,

JAMES.

Two more days and I'll have a year in.