

January 28, 1944

My dearest,

Really feel that all this is rather a dream after being kicked around and having no place to call my own for so long. From the first minute I arrived here I felt at home and was treated well but I'm ahead of my story.

Yesterday we pulled out of the 10th Replacement Depot. There was Mustafa and another fellow from Berkeley, Milton Farmer. We were put strictly on our own and given our tickets and itinerary. My name came first on the list so I had charge of the records and tickets. Oh, yes, there were three other fellows who I did not know that made up the rest in our party. We were all rather leary about taking off in a strange country and knowing nothing of the transportation system. All went well until we got to our routed destination.

As I wrote, the trains have separate compartments for about eight people. We had understood the English to be quite reserved and determined our entire journey would be made without speaking to more than a porter or conductor. Before we made our first change (we made four) there was quite a nice gentleman going the same place and started talking to us. He explained the British clothing ration system, the theater arrangements, and other little details about the Britishers. He also mentioned some of the magazines and those which corresponded to ours. I'd gotten a copy of Lilliput and found it corresponded very much to our Cornet. On our next change the

⑧ compartment contained several talkative persons.

One was a woman who lived on a farm near Cambridge and had a son in the Air Force. She gave us several new expressions and was making many comparisons between the States and Britain. She seemed to appreciate the American assistance, in fact, said our food had saved them but she held the same viewpoint as our farmers do - always giving the rough end of the deal. She had tried chewing gum & couldn't quite understand our fondness for it. No, I wasn't chewing any at the time! I did give her a stick I had as well as a Lucky which she seemed to enjoy. Said their cigarettes were about 40¢ a pk.

The man who was so talkative was with the Civil Service and lived in Cambridge and traveled a great deal. His Harris tweed overcoat and walrus would be the envy of any American man. He gave me two of the daily papers - a Radical & a Conservative one. Of course, the conversation was made by us and the woman I mentioned. We got auto money and he gave me a farthing ^(1/4d) and a tiny silver three pence (6) since they are rather uncommon now. We saw some of the larger denomination notes. Naturally, they were as interested in our stories of the States as we in their conversation. I don't think I will cease to be fascinated by their expressions & accents. As they left us it was "Cheris" and nearly every statement was a rhetorical question. Jolly is an adjective they use quite often too for a pleasant person - someone's company they enjoy. Later a woman from the Coast

③ going to Cambridge to be near her son got into our compartment. She had been living in Wales and came back to find her home bombed (or as they say "blitzed"). She mentions as casually as we would mention losing a coin. Our train ride was delightful until -


We got off the train at a very small station - as given in our itinerary and three nurses got off the same place - all second lieutenants. They called the Army transportation of the area after we found that our destination was the same. We were told our routing was wrong and it would take two hours for a truck to meet us. There are so many British towns with similar names that our transportation officer at 10th Repl. had just omitted a part of the name since it was hyphenated. We left the station and waited until a pub opened. We stayed there eating potatoe chips & drinking beer until the truck arrived. The nurses had been in Iceland for 18mo. and were most attractive.

We got here rather late and were immediately taken over to patients mess for the first good meal I've eaten in England. The six of us were put up in one of the wards for the night in grand comfortable beds with sheets!

This morning we got a look at our quarters. I'm still sure that I am dreaming. We are on an estate with an enormous manor (castle to me). The grounds are beautiful with enormous trees, beautiful pheasants wandering about and

(4) attractively arranged buildings. It is just a ^{station} hosp. we have nothing else here - a station hospital complete in itself. It is about fifty miles north of London near the little towns of Branwell, Petersburgh, and Drapstow. So think I can be in London in a short time for there is a station nearby.

The nurses live in the castle and the officers club is there. It was built in 1662 and the man who owns it still lives in one wing but is bed-ridden. Since there are no pictures of it available I will try to make a rough sketch of it for you sometime soon. It is beautiful!

The buildings are scattered around over the grounds mostly under the trees or near them. The Army has done wonders to keep it looking neat & not too much unlike it before they came. New billets as well as all of the buildings are the corrugated tin curved roof ones  and are quite comfortable. They are heated by coal stoves and have electric lights. Just outside our back door is the group of three buildings - the latrine, wash room, and shower room. Concrete walks connect most of the buildings and they are quite strict about walking on the grass. It is more than picturesque! It is impossible to describe in writing.

We were interviewed by the Colonel, the commanding officer of the post, this afternoon after having our service record checked. He was quite nice &

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tried to find out how well and for what we were qualified. He spent about five minutes with each of us and was quite nice. I'm almost sure that I will do clerical work but have received no definite assignment. I have some ^{sort} of interviews from what I gather in the morning at eight so shall know more tomorrow. After our interview went to the post for our ration cards and got our rations since there is a cert. an. day for enlisted men to get rations articles and other things any time during the week. We are allowed for a week two candy bars, pkg. of mints & pkg. of gum, two razor blades, pkg. of ~~caspio~~, carton of Cigo, two pkgs. of matches, and two cakes of soap.

Never have I been so pleased to learn anything - there are permanent K.P.'s and permanent guards. Therefore our details will be few if any! We have an A pass which entitles us to leave the post every night till midnight (bed check at eleven). We have a day off a week (can leave the post) and can get two 30 hour passes and one 48 hour pass a month. Never have I felt so free.

We serve ourselves at mess from Cafeteria style and on the table is salt, pepper, sugar, cream, jelly and meat sauce! We do eat out of our mess kits - it's all hard to believe after my last few camps in the States and two over here. You never knew just how bad they were. They have

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a spotless mess hall and meals are served between certain hours rather than at a certain hour so you can go between those hours; it is seldom necessary to wait in line.

In the way of recreation on the station, we have a Red Cross room (quite nice); I found a copy of Dec. 12th Sunday Courier among the home town papers so that sold me. Our day room is nice with radio, writing tables and bar for beer. There is a movie three times a week and the pictures are fairly new. I'm certain that I shall not want for something to do. With this blackout every night one doesn't want to wonder far from home.

The fellows are unusually nice and friendly. Those in my billet seem really swell. Everyone seems to try and make you feel at home. Several fellows on the post have come up and introduced themselves and asked me if I hadn't just come in. It is going to be a damn good organization to be with - the best. Being so small everyone must feel much closer & since I've always been in some casual camp with men coming and going it's quite a contrast.

I couldn't feel any happier over here and now if my job will only be a good one. With all of this I'm sure it will be.

~~There~~ There are several things I want you to send but will write later for them. I'm putting in a weekly order now for sweets! Just so it is sweet

① It makes no difference. We have plenty to eat but you know how I want something sweet all the time. Do you think it can be arranged?

Knew, my dear, that I am situated good and am going to like every minute here. I do wish you could see it and you'd understand. Today has been like spring so when spring and summer does come it will be delightful.

Good night to a wonderful family and may God watch ~~over~~ ^{over} you while we're absent.

Your devoted buddy

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