

March 22 - 1918

Same Old place

Dear mother - I rec. your long letter this morning. Sure was so glad to get it. I am just now getting able to write. I tore a hole in my hand - between thumb and first finger of right hand - it was $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch deep and you could stick a lead pencil in it. Done in bayonet fighting. The fellow I was instructing at the time did not do as I told him so I was the one who caught it. I went right to hospital and they swabbed it out with iodine. Maybe you think that didn't raise my hair. Well it was done the morning after I wrote the long letter to you. It is almost well now - but have a bandage to keep my hand clean so it is bunglesome to write. We did not go to trenches when we expected - but went last Mon. night. We are out there now - I have come in to camp this morning to write - my shift is 5 oc. in the evening to 1 oc. at night. the rest of the time I sleep or write or something else. Last night I was excused so I could go and take the first of the work in Masonry - and I am so glad Ive started it. Sure is wonderful, far more, and finer than I ever imagined it could be. And we are being permitted to progress with the work as fast as we Illinois boys can learn it as we do not know how long we are to be here and they are anxious that we have it as we are now started on it. It is without doubt the largest undertaking I've ever made and means the most I'm sure.

About the suit mother - go ahead and sell it if you can and use the money as you like best for you are sure welcome to all you can get out of the suit. Was surprised to hear of Harrold King making such good wages. Sure made me feel good to know that he could do it, only am sorry he is not putting a little more to aside for he has a chance for something if he could only see it in time - A person just cant realize anything until the opportunity comes and you are not prepared for it - and what then hurts - is to think - (I could have been prepared if I had only done it.) But again some people can't see life in that way and its probly a good thing we are not all alike.

Well mother this war is taking funny turns. At present I have an idea there will be no furlows granted for the farm boys - and again I heard it was just for those that were taken from the farms - so I realy dont know or have the least idea what it will be. I am not looking for a chance to get home soon that is certain in my mind, and am so sorry I caused you to have hopes on such an improbable foundation.

The penants you can take down - brush the dust off and stick them away with some moth balls or any thing that will keep the moth out for they are sure fond of penants.

The papering I would - leave the wall paper on both the kitchen and my room and paper the sitting room - and if I were doing it - the sitting room would be papered with a very good grade of paper - as it always looks finer and is cheaper in the long run I am sure. A rug in the sitting room I would think would add a hundred percent to the appearance of the room. Jove I sure would enjoy being there and helping make our little home more pleasant and comfortable - makes a fellow feel kindo like he was a joke - living down here in the dust and dirt - underground - in holes and tents - (most any place) and all the time have such a nice comfortable home if only allowed to go to it. War looks so foolish when a person just stops to consider what it all means. Civilization really is not making much progress after all.

Well you can hardly know how much good it does one to know that people do remember you in the way you write me. That alone is worth more than the effort it takes let alone all the other good that comes from it. And to know the friends at class are interested enough in me to appreciate it the way you say makes one feel like trying all the harder for life holds much more than just pleasure. Some people have a queer idea of what real enjoyment is. I think the ability to accomplish something really worth while would be about the keenest pleasure a man could realize. And if I can live that I may make my life usefull - When you come to the end of your journey here (which may be soon for some of us) you can have - I would think - a feeling of satisfaction nothing else could give. And if I can accomplish this - there is only one to get the real credit for it and that is the one who brought me into this world and taught me my first lessons of what right and wrong is. By Jove, mom, if it wasn't for what you've taught me - I would not be today even what little good I am - for I find I have inclinations too much to the reverse and some times a fellow has to take a pretty good hold on himself and work pretty hard to keep from lowering in your own estimation. But it sure is worth the effort to live a clean life. You can realize it more every day - Now I know and can see why,- but earlier in life when I could not see it - I did so because you taught me so - that is why I give you the credit - now it is possible for me to continue because the start was made right. So if you appreciate what I am doing now - don't you imagine I appreciate just as much what you have done for me?

Mother it sure hurts to think the government takes the attitude toward you as they do. (I used you - meaning the faith). When I know what your life has been since I can remember. No government is perfect - because run by imperfect people - and the bible makes it plain that this is to happen - and when I was just a kid how we used to discuss things that are right now happening - when every thing then looked so peacefull - and it all seemed so impossible at that time. I guess the scripture are full filling very fast now days.

Well I was rather surprised when you said you read my other letter to the class, I did think it a bit personal to do that with it - but I can't help writing as I feel for that is the only way we have visiting - but it seems queer my letters have such a circulation. Sometimes I think Id better watch what I say - but first thing I know I forget all about it and go right ahead writing in the same old way.

Maude just wrote a few days ago - got her letter today too. She said - "You would be surprised how many friends you have and how many ask me about you." No - mother I am not letting Maude down - nor am I going to. I don't tell her about going with any one for it is not nessessary as we are not engaged. I don't consider an engagement ammounting to much anyway for a girl can break one without any trouble at all and if she thinks enough of you she is going to stick by you if engaged or not. I've gone with a number of girls in Quincy - and with the one down here and out of the whole bunch of them I can tell you honestly Maude is the only real one of the bunch - Of course I don't know what she is doing - I've told her to go with other fellows and see if she wouldn't think just as much of them as she does me. I don't know only from what she writes that she hasn't had any luck so far. And as for me ever marrying I guess I would not hesitate a second who it would be. I have been going with others to see if I really did think quite a bit of Maude or just that I did. Have come to the conclusion I think more of her than I had an idea I would. I've gone with prettier girls who are not half the real company she is and I guess surface beauty don't ammount to much any way for so often that is all a pretty girl possesses any

way. As a rule they like too many fellows - I may be a little old fashioned in my ideas and no doubt am, and I may also have a queer idea of many things - but I stick to my ideas until I see or have proof they are wrong then its time to change your mind and accept what you feel to be the most correct.

As for having the company of decent girls - its the only real enjoyment after all - those that have "hit the ball" hard will tell you so, and I figure - whats the use spending any of my time with a class of people or girls Id not want to introduce to my mother and entertain in my own home. That class also destroys a fellows mind for bigger things in life.

I sure was glad to hear of Mary Lopp doing so well - I sure think a world of that girl and hope she gets the best possible for her.

No mother I have not turned over my map as new officers are coming and going all the time and it would not be appreciated in the least by the present captain and colonel so I am keeping it for such time when it may show what I can do to those that are really interested in something of this kind. It would be a loss to me now to turn it over to those in command. If I have to send my trunk home soon I dont know but I will send it home for the present.

My little broken legged sgt. is on crutches now and is going home on a 60 day furlow to rest up and be among home folks while he is unable to be of service here. I sure am glad he gets to go - for time sure would drag here for him.

From 12 oc. until 2 it has kept up a steady down pour of rain. going to be rather uncomfortable for me tonite out in that shell hole where my post is. The street here in camp is standing under a couple inches of water. The ground is so level.

A Lieutenant Burton of our company took his first work at the Masonic Hall last nite as I did. also a member of the band. 3 fellows from this company. You'll never know how glad I am that I've been given the opportunity for this work. I guess I am pretty much of this world and there is nothing that will mean more to me that this while on earth. I mean of lodge & things of this nature. Well write when you can - I sure enjoyed your long letter - told me so much I am interested in - Your most loving son.

Paul B.