

Monday, 18 December 1944
Somewhere in France.

Florence, sweetheart:

Suffering seems to be one of the things we can always be certain of in addition to taxes and death, and the present situation at home surely bears this out. We have had our share of worry and aggravation in the past and present, and no doubt there is more in store for us in the future, but the news about Joel is unhappy. I quite understand how it affects you, to say nothing about the rest of the family, but I look to you to hold them all together in this moment of stress. You are the strongest character in the family, you have been thru life and death, you are a realist, and you have been the leaning post for the family for a long time. In addition to all this you are the guiding light for the rest of them even if they refuse to acknowledge it. I hesitate to add that being so much in love also tends to give you courage and confidence, but I know what it is doing for me. Steel yourself, my dear, for the inevitable, and I join you in hoping that all will be well with the poor kid.

As yet I have not definitely learned his present ailment, although knowing the history of the case it is not too difficult to surmise the rest. Your letter dated Nov 29th arrived today, and you manage to continue to evade the facts. Your V Mail letter dated 2 Dec also arrived today and still no facts. A letter from Bob dated 28 Nov was among the mail delivered to-day, and although he relates that Joel is a very sick boy still no facts. In several previous letters I have requested a resume of all this so please relieve the suspense..... or else, I'll continue to ask the same questions in succeeding letters.

Your letter dated 29th Nov was really swell, and quite a relief from those short V-Mail forms. I realize only too well the strain you are under at present so I'll forgive the scarcity of long letters, but there may be occasions when penning a lengthy letter to me will relieve the ache in your heart. The enclosure also arrived in good order and thank you very much. From the tenor of this letter I assume that you have written other letters which have not yet arrived. I will patiently await their arrival, and advise when received.

The suggestion about the arches may sound reasonable from where you are, but Army arches are constructed from a little leather, a prayer and spit. No steel or strong support, and are of no value to me. I will continue to wear the ones I have until I reach the stumps of my knees, and then who knows. No use seeing the medics because they only offer 4 aspirin for flat feet instead of the usual 2 which cures all other ailments. However it will be a great deal more pleasure for me to obtain some additional perfume for you, as a matter of fact I have a bottle of Caron's for you now and will acquire some additional flacons to include in my next package. Antiques are a bit more difficult to find at a reasonable price due to the value of the money, but rest assured I continue to keep my eyes open hoping to find unusual buys. By the way did you receive any of my packages?

You acknowledged receiving my letters dated Nov 11, 12, and 14th, but I wonder if you have received all the mail I sent you during the

month of October. Be a good kid, peruse the letters written during the month and advise the dates. I will check them off my list. Also anxious to learn whether or not you ever adjusted the McKesson dividend check. The Lodge forwards the notice to me, but continues to use the Ft. Snelling address. Please get one of the boys to give my friend Herbert the correct APO number, and perhaps the notices I receive will not be more than 2 months old. It is difficult for me to guess what has been censored in my letters as I always endeavor to keep within the censorship regulations. However it is now permissible for me to tell you that I have seen or visited St. Lo, Coutances, Caen, and Granville. I have some snaps of these towns and will include them in my next bundle. Taking your suggestion I will endeavor to forget the more sordid side of things I have seen, and continue to dream of the days of happiness to follow my inevitable mustering-out.

Bob's letter relates some of the events at home, but seems to follow in sequence a previous, which apparently I have not received as yet. He assures me that the folks are well, apparently not worrying to an extreme and will bear up bravely until the war's end finds us both home again. I expect you will tell me what their reaction has been since he left home. He promised to keep me posted from time to time as to his address, however I suggest you also keep me advised as to his wanderings, so that I may be able to correspond with him. I am sure he will be as anxious to receive mail as I am. With you spending so much of your time in the country during his leave I wonder if he and Jim had the opportunity of becoming well acquainted. Did Jimmy call him "Uncle Bobby"? How was Bob impressed with our little bundle of happiness? His letter is most enthusiastic about the little Tyke but it may be that he is trying to humor me; of course I know better but there is always the slim chance that such is the case. I am awaiting some snaps of him in an officer's uniform. Did you see Fran during the leave, how is she looking and feeling?

Now my darling let me turn to the events of yesterday's wandering about town. Several of us arrived in town early in the morning to attend the 10 o'clock Mass at the beautiful Cathedral, and also to view the exquisite paintings and construction of the interior. The Cardinal was also supposed to appear at this mass but he missed it. In any event we spent an unusual hour at this place and left inspired with solemnity and good will towards all mankind except the Germans. Leaving the church we promenaded about town seeking things to buy and did manage to pick up an item or two of interest. It began to sprinkle after a short time and Blair Johnson and I were left alone to do as we pleased. The others deciding to go to the movies. As we walked down a side street a native approached with the query as to whether or not we had had dinner. Answering in the negative he insisted we join him and his family. Please realize honey that this is a most welcome request so far from home and its little domesticities, but the realization that these people have difficulty enough feeding themselves made us hesitate about accepting the kind invitation. However the man insisted that he would not have invited us unless he had felt that he could spare the little food. This convinced us and we were off to the stranger's home for a little bit of sorely needed home life. The family was most kind to us, making us feel right at home and doing everything in their power to please both of us. Dinner was hardly elaborate, and consisted of the following: vegetable soup, mutton, potatoes, warm apple-sauce, followed by a piece of pastry, which was really a treat. The lady of the house must be an excellent cook to

have made this repast so tasty, and eating it in the kitchen certainly added a little something to the meal that army cooks know nothing about. We ate in the kitchen only because there is not enough fuel available to heat more than one room in the house. Fortunately the man spoke fairly good English but his wife and son could only struggle with words and sentences. They insisted we stay for the day, and supper. The second meal consisted of fried herrings, bread, and ersatz coffee, which tasted as bad as anything I ever drank. The herrings though were a delight to eat and I told her in no uncertain terms. She felt so proud of her cuisine and smiled from ear to ear. We were there until about 9 P. M., sitting in an arm-chair, talking about many things of interest to all of us, showing off our pictures and snaps, and during the lulls dreaming of the days to come when being home will be a reality. Several relatives including a few children came in to see the American soldiers, and although we had very little to offer with us, we did have some gum and some Charms to distribute, but regreted not having any chocolate. It was a wonderful day my sweetheart, and the people insisted we come back next Sunday for a Xmas dinner, and to be sure to return with 2 additional soldiers. Need I add if we are still in the vicinity I intend spending Xmas with these kind people, but my thoughts will be with you and Jim and my folks. I do hope at least one of my packages arrives before next Sunday so that I may treat these people to some of the delicacies you included, but if they don't I have some Hershey bars, Lux soap and gum to treat them with. These are very scarce items in addition to coffee and cocoa chocolate. I intend doing all I can to help make their Xmas as present for them as they will try to make it for us. Believe you me, this was a good deal for us, and I am looking forward to next Sunday.

Had our picture snapped yesterday and will forward it you as soon as we get the snapshot. I feel fine and dandy, keeping right on the ball, and anxiously perusing every copy of Stars and Stripes for some clue as to how long the Germans can hold out. Weather remains fair, and the mail is coming thru in fairly good style.

Hope you and Jim are in excellent health and spirits, and that Jim is not wearing you out these days. Your vacations this winter in the country should do both of you lots of good, and I am awaiting the photos and latest snapshots of both of you to see for myself how well you look. Kiss Jimmy for me, as well as my mom and pop, and I'll kiss you in mind with all the love and adoration I have for the sweetest girl in the world. My very best to everyone, and please tell Thelma how sorry I am about her rotten luck. Stay well, keep smiling, and write at length often.

As ever,

George

[Faint handwritten text, possibly "1861"]

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