

Malenas. Belguin
Tuesday, 11 Sept. 45.

Florence, Dearest:

Coming down the stretch before reaching Lame is taking the longest time, but my visit to my good friends here is doing even so much to such the hours by. Frank and Jet are so determined to feed me dishes and delicacies that are not found in any chow that I have finally called a halt on the volume of food. Among other things I am most determined to keep a vacuum in my stomach for those rare dishes that only you can prepare in the manner most to my liking. In the past few days I have eaten dozens of the most delicious racks I've had in over a year, have had fried flounders twice, eels in a special sauce twice, and other strange dishes I hesitate to write about. This will merely add to the innumerable store of stories and experiences I have to relate to you. However, I am having a most wonderful time, eating, talking, and sight-seeing, not to overlook the ever-present dreams of the most wonderful wife and sweetheart a fellow ever had.

Ray and the other two traveling companions are in still living at the hotel. I try to see them daily, and from the hang-overs they spend daily I am presuming that their nightly escapades are giving them much pleasure, if an earthly sort. Being more of a dreamer than realist I have satisfied some of my desires eating apples, pears, and tomatoes, all freshly picked. I continue to look forward with tremendous anticipation to the day when my other desires will be shared with you. It seems ages ago that I held you in my arms, and kissed you, deep and long, but now that the future seems closer, I can hardly await the day. Patience, and more patience, I suppose, but the sooner the better.

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Yesterday, the Conhemans and I visited Antwerp.
We traveled there in a train (traily. con) to enable us to
see the brick factories enroute, and then returned home
in the electric train. The day was a bit cloudy which made
it difficult to take pictures, but I think I got some
when the sun peeked out for about 10 minutes. We walked
along the dock area, saw many ships from various
nations, but no troopships departed during our visit
there. Also heard no buzz-bombs this time. I treated
them to dinner consisting of eels in some kind of a sauce,
not bad at all, sat in a sidewalk cafe to rest and
watch the rest of the world go by, and I managed to
obtain 2 weeks of rationing. The latter yielded 14 pieces of
chocolate, canned candy, 4 packs of gum, cigarettes, soap,
toilet powder, and a can of Dale's pineapple juice. This
was the first time they had ever tasted the latter.
Naturally I gave them all this stuff as it was cheap
re-fragment of the food and heard they give me. You
know one hand washes the other - ask Al and Beaul.
There are many souvenirs to buy in Antwerp but the prices
are tremendously high; however I hope to get you something
before I return to King. While in Antwerp I mailed you
letter # 241, as well as one to the folks. I also sent you a
Jewish newspaper published in Amsterdam separate cover.

Antwerp as well as many of the Belgian and
French towns which were not damaged too much are
rapidly waking out from under the effects of the war. Prices
are high and going higher; clothing and any cloth goods are
hard to get, as are shoes and leather goods, but if you
have money enough practically anything is available,
on the black market. The Jews are back at their old
stand in the diamond market here, and it warmed my
heart to realize that the insignificant Jew, who had for
so long suffered at the hands of the Nazis, had survived
despite everything. They can get us down, my darling, but
we will lick them every time.

Strangely enough there is a large surplus of fruit and vegetables available at extremely low prices. Tomatoes picked right out of the garden sell for the equivalent of 4 to 5¢ a lb; peans the same; the most delicious white and blue grapes cost a bit more, as do most of the other vegetables. This is due to the fact that their export of this produce has been halted for this year. On the other hand fresh fish (salt-free) retails at almost \$1.00 to \$1.50 per lb. Meat is strictly black market because so little is available on ration. Yesterday I taught them how to make a mushroom omelet with onions. Much to my own surprise it turned out like yours, and we all enjoyed eating it.

While here I ordered a bracelet made out of the pretty Dutch 10¢ pieces I had accumulated, and I expect to have it in a few days. If you don't want to wear it, perhaps you'll want to give it away. In any event it's quite attractive, and I'm sure will not go to waste. In a day or so Ray and I are going to Brussels to try to get some perfume and other things. I sure hope I find something unusual for you.

To-day Frank and I got us a couple of Belgian biscuits, which I can hardly begin to describe. Well I tell you more than that I feel like a French foodie. I feel like I've been clipped for the summer. Following this a visit to the chateaux, and a stroll about town. After lunch we spent the balance of the afternoon sitting in the back-yard garden chewing the fat, and eating grapes, peans and apples. Ray and one of the other fellows dropped in to visit us, and to mention Ray and I have a date to go to Brussels for the items I mentioned above a week ago. I guess you can gather by now that this letter is being written in shifts. After supper we intended going to the movies to see Cary Grant and K. Hepburn in some picture. I'll complete

this when I return from the show:-

Well, the picture was antiquated, but the 10-
ocean fallowing was really a surprise. There are
planned and as good as many brands available at
home. But the portraits are skimpy, and the prices way
out of line compared to Joe-war figures - for the pictures.
Of course I can't let Frank pay for anything when we
go out, because I feel the added expense of feeding me
is difficult enough for them. Of course I'll tell you more
about all this when I'm smuggled in, our own again.

The weather has been mild, but a bit cloudy.
I've never felt better in my life, and if only I were en
route home I'd be in grand spirits. I sure hope you,
Jim and all our kinfolk are in excellent health and
spirits. Naturally I'll have to wait until I return
to him to read those wonderful letters of yours, but
time is passing quickly. I do hope Bern has given
birth, and that all is well with her. I'll continue
writing to this address, but I suppose all the letters
will finally reach you in due time. This one will be
mailed at the Red Cross in Brussels.

Kiss Jim for me, and a special hug and
kiss on his birthday, give my very best to my
folks and yours, and keep smiling all in due time,
and then happiness and fun for many, many years.
all my love and affection to the Miss America of
the Staff domain.

As ever.

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