

Hopital 43rd St. Valery en Caux Seine Auf

I wish I were sitting down to supper with you right now, I yearn for home food and plenty of it.

Dear Amy - I haven't had a minute to write you in the last three weeks and shan't do much at it now but I'll explain why. The first of December we were very empty, had only about twenty five patients in the house and they were all doing well. The nurses were more than sufficient to look after that number so Miss Nelson was letting people go on little vacations; as for me it seemed a fitting time to go up to Paris to finish up my dentistry. I was particularly anxious to go for some of the nurses who were going were in Paris for a few weeks of sailing. I went up Friday morning, planning to stay ten days and make it a little vacation. I had lots of things to get, some things for you and the children among others as I had a chance to send them home by Nurse Clarke. As luck would have it, Saturday morning I happened on nice underclothes I thought you might like, but instead of doing any more shopping, such as hunting up things for the children, Saturday afternoon I went to the movies and to tea. When I got in I found a telegram saying to come back at once, wounded were arriving. I hadn't finished at the dentist's so hated to go and hastened to telegraph if I might stay till Monday, it was too late for the afternoon train, the only good train. But when I came in that time I found an official telephone message saying to take the first train. Of course that settled it so I hustled to the station found that the only train till the next afternoon left at 10PM, they hunted up two other girls who were in Paris at the same time, and told them to come on. We had an awfully funny trip. In the first place it was an awful train, made up I think of all the old junk, in the second place it seemed as if the whole French and Belgian army was travelling so it was dreadfully crowded, in the third place it took till 5:30 AM to get to Molteville, ordinarily a three hour trip. We did get corner seats, in the same compartment and we slept a little there. When it got too bad we'd get down our large lunch box and eat. Once I went to sleep and a trunk rolled me off the seat into the man opposite who was a friend across the aisle. We had a merry time but the worst was when at five thirty we were [delayed?] not at Molteville and for two solid hours had to walk the platform in the cold and the wet and the blackness, waiting for the train to back in. When we would demand the train they would say oh yes it was supposed to leave at six but we'd be lucky if it left at seven. I don't believe I was ever any colder or more miserable in my life, we left vowing all kinds of vengeance on the people if we had been called back on a false alarm. Well to make a long story short we arrived at nine and found that we were badly needed. It is always hard for Dr. Fitell to have Miss Nelson Miss Clay or me away, Miss Nelson is head and runs the operating room while Miss Clay and I each have a floor for Dr. Fitell. Mine is the biggest in the house and the hardest, I have more than double Miss Clay's number of beds, almost double the first floor and ten more than the third. The third is reserved exclusively for walking patients so it doesn't begin to [?] like the other three. When new patients come in we empty all our old ones we don't want to keep up there. It is sort of a [?] [?]. There is no use talking we get splendid work for we run our own floors to suit ourselves and Dr. Fitell leaves a great deal to us, of course we haven't worked with him for two years for nothing.

Now we have been put into a different class instead of receiving the more lightly wounded like all the other hospitals in the war zone we get heavy ones particularly bone cases such being Dr. Fitell's specialty. Also we draw from three distributing stations instead of one. At the present time as there is not much fighting the men are not directly from the trenches but from the [?] at the front. In this lot there were one hundred and you never smelled such smells or saw such sights. I can't tell you how many amputations there were almost all of which will have to be done over. One man has both legs gone, he lay in a shell hole six days, there was nothing to eat but the hole was filled with water and in that water lay decaying the body of his best friend. And he had to drink that water to keep alive. Pleasant isn't it. Such wrecks as many of these men are such faces! Well we've gotten rid of the smells and we've gotten rid of a lot of the pus and they are beginning to come to life but I am afraid there will be some who will never go out the front door. Two have already died.

We had a splendid Christmas for the mother of one of the nurses sent over a hundred and seventy five filled stockings then we added other things to them. Of course there was the usual champagne and cake in the afternoon, and phonographs and so forth. In the evening we had a dress up party and a Christmas tree with jokes. The boxes you sent have never put in an appearance but I think they will in time. There is just one sure way of sending things as I have said before, by parcel post. Then they come through comparatively quickly, express is very long and there are always big dues to pay at this end. The Clearing House also is slow as it is freight or express. However the things will be more appreciated when they do come. I didn't have anything from anybody and not too many letters. I got Howards Christmas letter on New Year's day.

Now that things are a little settled I am going to make another try to finish my teeth, going up on Friday. Dr. Fitele is planning to do some clearing out so I must be back before another lot arrives. You never know what is going to happen from one day to the next. Tell Howard he mustn't print my letters they are not for publication and I don't want to feel that what I write is not kept in the family as it were.

It is almost like saying Happy New Year or the fourth of July but I do hope you had a good Christmas and New Years. I am impatient for the children's pictures. Tell them how sorry I was I couldn't send them anything, this time I shall get them something and send home by the first returning [?] possible. By the way tell Howard Sr. that thing I sent him was a French gas mask that had been used in the trenches, the eye shields look queer because I put the thing through the sterilizer and the heat divided[?] the [?].

Lots of love for all the family

Marion

January 3 1917