December 4th, 1916

My Dearest Marie:

I have finally done what you have asked me to do so often in your past letters – I have taken a vacation. I will tell you about it. Matters have not been so I have been able to be away for any great length of time, such as a week or ten days, for it is not possible to handle work of the sort I have been handling without being constantly on the job. Also, as I have said before, I much more enjoy buying the things I have bought and doing anything else that to you this seems to be a good investment to make. But to return to the vacation – yesterday morning, Uncle Dempsey and I took the 9:45 train to Nancy and arrived there at 12:45. Three hour ride to go 50 miles. When we arrived there, we had our passes.
vivid at the Fronotta, and went at once to Walter's cafe for a meal. I might add that the meal was the real object of our trip. Of it I was conscious to live on corn bread and beans for two years. Well dear—such a meal! I have had nothing like it since leaving Indianapolis and so you can appreciate just how much I enjoyed it. With an appetite whetted by one year's abstinence from any but army food I started in on a meal fit for a king and four such gourmands you never have seen before. We started in with oysters on the half shell—1 dozen apiece. They were fresh and cold and Oh! so good. First sir had in a year. Then a thick soup and it was delicious.
That was followed by a perfectly wonderful oeuflet with chopped herbs — such!!! Words can't describe it but I'll say that the French can make oeuflets.

Now what do you think — we had each, one of the most wonderful giant lobsters — with mayonnaise — fresh, sweet, tender, delicious beyond description and it tasted better than anything I ever ate in my life. Thinking it a treasure — to eat the next dish without due ceremony, I took the liberty of just cracking — not really breaking — one of my promises to you, and drank one glass of Chiquot 1823. We only had one bottle and I had only one glass and I tipped it and
enjoyed it for it was the best glass of wine I ever drank. (we'll say again, it ought to have been). I am sure you will pardon any one violation of the animistic dear. How about it? I assure you I was very temperate. Wee, to continue - the purpose for which we bought the wine was to wash down the most wonderful roast chicken, turnite, potatoes, spinach, Brussel sprouts and then a marvelous salad. By that time we were all comatose and had to stop although we didn't want to. And now to prove that our vacation was a good one and that we enjoyed it, I will confess the cost of our fees. It was just the equivalent of $50.00 in American money.
for the four of us, and while it seems a crime to spend so much, we all were satisfied for it was our only meal and our only splurge in a year and personally I couldn’t have spent my share of it more satisfactorily. The others agree with me on that point.

After dinner we did one or two errands for the others and then took the train again, arriving at Camp at 8:30. I found four letters from you—wonderful letters—and they made a perfect end to a perfect day. I will impress long enough to say that I never read a finer line of stuff than is in [illegible] Nyland’s letter, and
I wonder how he expects anyone to believe it. There are others over here, he must not forget. I am glad Doni has his captaincy. He deserves it, but he can thank his luck that he got it before he arrived in France for he never would have gotten it here.

We are still up in the air regarding what we are going to do. We expect news every day but it doesn't come. It is a never-wearing situation but one we are not able to help. I will be very glad to be ordered to move anywhere from here for I am "fed up" with this place. It has
became monstrous.

Now I must close you.
I must get at my work. Give
my dear baby and glad
my love and a kiss. With
dearer love to you sweetheart,
and millions of kiss. I
love you.

Daddy.

Mark Smith, Capt., U.S.S.
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Armen E.T., France