

NATIONAL WAR WORK COUNCIL OF
YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS
OF THE UNITED STATES

"WITH COLORS"

April 17th 1918

Dearest Marie:-

Today is my first day on duty with an acting operating team. I am assistant to Major Morrow and Dempsey is anaesthetist. I am glad to be associated with him because he is a very well known surgeon and is very skillful and in addition has had a great opportunity to observe the new surgical methods which are being employed over here now. So there is no doubt that we will both profit greatly by the experience gained in work with him. All the others are still very busy working on the settling business and it is really a hard job.

Last night Villars and I both walked down to the officers Club

and played some billiards. We met some of the staff officers of the Division we are attached to and they are surely very fine gentlemen.

The news in the papers this morning is very encouraging; the British and French are still holding their line firmly and I now don't think the Germans will ever break through. I believe it is a physical impossibility. It is interesting to see us fight for the news each day, but it is not at all surprising because this drive and its end results mean a great deal to each one of us. It means that we either do or do not finish up with this war business in a greater or less time. That's lucid isn't it? But I am sure you know what I mean.

Yesterday for awhile, I helped

NATIONAL WAR WORK COUNCIL OF
YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS
OF THE UNITED STATES

"WITH COLORS"

² 191

Captain [Emmons] with his job as censor and it was most amusing. Also pathetic. Some of the letters were so funny and others were sad. On the whole I don't envy the censor his work at all because it is certainly very trying. I'd much rather be what is known as a war surgeon, and I don't believe there is a harder worked dog in the whole army than he.

It has cleared up somewhat today although it still is very threatening and may rain at any time. I hope it does clear off and get warmer for the wet chilly weather of the past two or three days has been most disagreeable. But "C'est le guerre" and we must not complain.

I don't want to discourage you in your study of French dearest because I think it is very commendable but I don't want you to expect much of me in that hue either. We are in a regular American community. We have very little necessity for conversation with the French and consequently don't learn very much of it. I have a knowledge of very simple conversational French but I don't expect to develop my knowledge to any very marked degree.

This town is very interesting. At some time or other it has been seriously maltreated by artillery fire and a great many of the buildings are first class ruins. I went into a church down town, the steeple of which was completely demolished. It is a very beautiful Catholic Church and we will often go

NATIONAL WAR WORK COUNCIL OF
YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS
OF THE UNITED STATES

"WITH COLORS"

³ 191

there to services, as I understand it is still being used. There is an anti-aircraft station near here, and we often hear very hot firing, when the German planes come over. We have to wear our tin hats then because of the rain of shrapnel etc that always accompanies the firing.

Yesterday our hospital got its first wounded patients. One of them died before night but the others are getting along all O.K. It is wonderful the work that the Red Cross is doing to help out these hospitals over here. We just recieved 700 pairs of pyjamas and 500 prs of sox as a result of your good efforts Dearest, and I am now sending the sincere thanks of the whole

staff to you for your interest and help. These things are simply invaluable to the wounded men and contribute wonderfully to their comfort and recovery.

I have been in the operating room ever since I had to stop at the above point and as soon as assembly calls I must go back for we have several more cases to operate on which came in this morning. Now I am feeling interested again for I am at work that I enjoy. It seems like old times to be scrubbed up and in an operating room at the same old game. Major Morrow is a good operator but very fussy and "old womanish." His work can be compared very favorably with Alex Campbell's and you have often heard me express myself about him. But he is a fine fellow and I am

NATIONAL WAR WORK COUNCIL OF
YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS
OF THE UNITED STATES

"WITH COLORS"

191

going to enjoy working with him immensely, although it does seem strange not to be doing the work myself. However a 1st Lieutenant is mighty, not to be working in a ward doing dressings, and that I surely wouldn't enjoy. On the whole I am very well satisfied indeed.

I thought this morning that it was going to clear up a bit but it fooled me. It is still cloudy cold and raining and is far from cheerful weather. I am very much in hopes that more mail will come from home tonight. We received none last night. I do love so much to get your letters and will be perfectly happy if only some come tonight. I hope

my letters are coming through to you in good time now. The last three or four weeks I know they must have been slow on account of the problem of transportation. Two of the men went up to the trenches this afternoon and wanted me to go but I considered my family and refused to take the risk inasmuch as it was not in line of duty and could possibly do no good. Incidentally, I also considered my own health – secondary of course. I haven't any "hero stuff" in me and will cheerfully stay just as far back from the trenches as I can with good grace, and that, believe me, will be no closer than I am right now. After this war is over believe me, I'd much prefer being a live

NATIONAL WAR WORK COUNCIL OF
YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS
OF THE UNITED STATES

—————
"WITH COLORS"

—————⁵————— 191

doctor to a dead hero.

Well Lover I must close
now. I have to go to work again.
Give my love to all. Kiss my
darlings – including Glad.
With worlds of love – all I have
in my heart – and millions of
kisses, I am your loving
Husband.

1st Lt. Ansel B. Smith M.R.C.

EH 2 U.S.A.

A.E.F.