

December 23-18

My Dearest:-

Never ever in all my life have I known nor even imagined what the (up to this point written on above date. It is now the 24th and I will complete the sentence beyond the brackets) word work means. I have tried and tried, then tried again, to finish this letter, but up to eleven thirty last night I could find us time and at that time I will admit, I was perfectly willing to go to bed.

We are simply flooded with work now. This is an immense plant we are running. We have five buildings – each one much larger than Blodgett Hospital and holding 400 patients apiece. In addition there are five other buildings used as baths, mess and nurses quarters. The institution is now the biggest American hospital

with the Army of Occupation, and patients are coming in in a steady stream. I am now in command of a Detachment of 375 men, which is 100 more than an Infantry Company, and believe me it keeps me going. I have scarcely a minute to myself, and in truth, I have already been interrupted 20 times since I started to write today.

Today is the day before Christmas. It is a warm sunny day, much more like October than mid-December. It hardly seems possible to me that it is so near the season of the year that always means so much to us at home. Here it means work just like any other day. We are in the Army. Never will I forget the wonderful Christmas of last year, and God's

goodness in permitting me to be with my dear family. It was a Christmas I will never forget; it was unique and different than any I have ever spent or will spend. It was so wonderful to be with you all. How sweet the babies were! Do you remember how the little rascals cheated in the morning by looking through the room door, and how excited Brother was, while little Marie pretended she hadn't seen the tree? I never will forget it. It was the most wonderful thing I ever saw. And do you remember the dinner at the Fort? Wasn't it fun? I am sorry the boys can't have a Christmas this year but it is really impossible so we

will all do without. O! well. I guess we can stand it once, and I assure you dear it is a considerable source of comfort to know that it will only be once. In Germany for Christmas! Who would have thought when we left America, that we would be on the Rhine by this time? I certainly did not. But here we are – a victorious army, and the war all won. Settlement of Peace terms will take some time no doubt, but it won't take as much as is supposed if all the Germans are of a mind with these in Coblenz. Occasionally we see bursts of hostility but for the most part they are rather

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docile and glad the Americans are here to pull order out of the chaos that existed when the German armies had control. Strangely enough some of these people are apparently glad they are whipped although their joy may be only apparent.

The brutality of the German nature shows in many ways to us, in the manner they treat their women and children and horses. I never have seen so many cases of cruelty to animals as I see now. Of course they are all handled by our American M.P.'s, but the spirit is there just the same. They are a brutal treacherous race

of people, and they call themselves Christians.

The Rhine is truly a beautiful river. It is about 1/3 the width of the Detroit river and is muddy, but the scenery on its banks is most beautiful. Directly overlooking the city on the opposite bank of the Rhine is the great fort of Ehrenbreitstein which is the most powerful German fortification in existence. It is now garrisoned by American troops. Everywhere are Americans, and wonderful soldiers they are, too. We are up here now with the pick of the American Army. The 1st, 2nd, 4th, 26th, 42nd, and

our own Michigan 32nd are all here. Beside Evac. #2, there are only five other hospitals of any size and they are not yet running. While we consider it an honor to be here, I for one am already sufficiently honored and would like to come home.

But the need for me is not yet over, and we both, my darling, must not be impatient for the need of our wonderful country comes before all else. It will soon be all over, and I will be starting in life again, and we both will always have the most supreme satisfaction in the knowledge that we did

all we could for our country where she needed us. And it can never be said that the dear ones at home have not done an equal amount with we over here, to win this war.

I saw the first newspaper yesterday of any where near recent date. It was a "Stars and Stripes" of December 20th and gave us an interesting account of our own entrance into Coblenz. Last night I met the first Dr.

I have met – in fact the first man I have met – from Grand Rapids. His name is Foshee and he used to be an intern at Butterworth. I never knew him but he remembered me

as he has seen me work there, and we greeted each other like a couple of long lost brothers. It seemed good to see him and we are going to have dinner together later in the week. He is with the 2nd Battalion of the 39th Infantry, which is the M.P. Battalion of the city, and is a lieutenant. He expressed a lot of surprise that I was not a Major, and salved my injured feelings by saying to some of the other officers, not in my presence that I was one of the three or four leading surgeons of Michigan!!

What do you think of that?

Well dearest, I must close.

I will write my Christmas letter tomorrow. I love you all, my dear ones, and send millions of kisses. God bless you. I love you.

Daddy.

Ansel B. Smith

Capt. M.C.