December 23-18

My Dearest:

Never never in all my life have I known nor ever imagined what the (up to this point written on above date) 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 no time and at that time I was perfectly willing to go to bed.

We are simply flooded with work now. This is an immense problem we are running. We have five buildings—each one much larger than Bloedgett Hospital and holding 400 patients apiece. In addition there are five other buildings used as partly ward and nurses' quarters. The institution is now the biggest American hospital...
with the Army of Occupation and
patrols are coming in in a steady
stream. I am now in command of a Detachment of 375
men, which is so more than my
Infantry Company, and believe
me if keeps the 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 Christ
mas. It is a warm sunny day,
much more like October than
mid-December. It hardly seems
possible to see that it is so far
the season of the year that al-
ways means so much to us at
home. Here it means work.
Here it means work,
just like any other day. We are
in the Army. Never will I
forget the wonderful Christ
mas of last year, and God's
goodness in permitting me to be
with my dear family. It was
a Christmas I will never for
get; it was unique and dif
ferent than any I have ever
spent or will spend. It was
to 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 Christ-
mas! 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 would take as much as in support of 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
Soile 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 of 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, wonderful soldiers. They are, too. We are up here now with the pick of the American Army. The 103d, 2nd, 4th, 42nd, and
our own Michigan 32nd are all here. Besides 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 your 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 when she needed us. And it
can never be said that the
dear ones at home have
not done an equal amount
with us 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 me an in-
teresting 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 Great
Britain. His name is Forbee,
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 W.P. Battalion of the city, and is a lieutenant. He expressed a lot of surprise that I was not a Major, and salving my injured feelings by trying 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

Lois B. Smith
Capt. W.O.