

WITH THE COLORS.

Y.M.C.A.

113 F. A.

Aug. 21, 1918.

Dear Father:-

The Birthday letter you wrote me came today, and was one of the most enjoyable ones I have had in some time. Fact is mail has been scarce over here lately, and one from you and one from ~~Emma~~ ^{Emma} are about all I have gotten in about ten days. Sunday afternoon I met a Senator from Nebraska who is over here supposedly to "investigate", and he said they were going to hurry the mail up. That remaind me - Please omit 30th Division and 55th Brigade,

Chaplain B. R. Lacy Jr.,

113th F. A.

American Expeditionary Forces,

Via New York."

That will get me quickest.

Speaking of the Senator (can't find out his name and did not hear it when called) he surely was here to politic. He didn't seem to have anything on his mind but to meet soldiers from his State. He was here for that. The first thing he asked me was if there were any Nebraskans in our regiment. I told him of one that had many and he hiked off to find it. Seemed funny seeing an American in citizens clothes & he and his secretary are the only ones I have seen. The "Y" men as well as the Army is in Kahki.

Speaking of Dr. ^Martin coming to France. What on earth could he do? He could return to U.S.A. after six months and tell about it, but I think a week of real "Y" work would finish him. Talking is a small part of a man's work over here & when you do talk you have to have about 180 lbs of steam in the boiler, and you have to be able to get all the old engine has in her in about 20 to 30 minutes. Now some men can't get to going well under an hour. A big preacher from Grand Rapids, biggest church there, and showed me circulars about it. A fine speaker too, came to Coetquidan to do "Y" work. They were short handed, always are, and they put him in the canteen selling candy & cigarettes. He lasted about half a week at it, simply not the kind of work he was good for, and a grocer clerk name(d) Jack Lacey from Atlanta can put it all over the "Dr" in this work. I finally got it that these 6 month "Y" workers are here to go back and advertise - many of them. The "duration" boys in the "Y" as in the Army are catching it. And believe me they are "putting it over" here. Lack of supplies and short of help is the main trouble.

Tom wrote you about the hike Friday & Saturday. He told most of the interesting things. The most pathetic sight I have seen in France was the funeral conducted entirely by women. Not a man in the procession, and the coffin carried on planks by six women, preceded by a woman with cross, ringing a bell, and followed by a group of women, all in black. Not a priest, not a horse to draw the wagon, no wagon to be drawn.

Another sad thing was the death of a boy in Tom's battery

from a pistol wound received from a Frenchman by accident. The boy was on range guard, at dinner this old peasant brought him some butter to eat. As the two boys ate the old man asked to see the automatic. They are dangerous weapons. This one went off and the ball plowed through our man's stomach. I saw the old man after the accident and his grief was so moving I could hardly keep from crying. He said he had lost his own son 9 months ago, on the front but this was far worse. As he stood in the hospital ~~bed~~^{bare} headed, without coat & with wooden shoes, crying as if his heart would break I almost broke down myself. The poor lad live(d) all Saturday & died early Sunday morning. I saw him Saturday & he was so brave.

Perhaps I wont get a chance to write again for some time now. I do not know what the regulations will be where we are going, but I'll try to write home at least once a week. The boys are all glad to go anywhere, not that they mind this place, but they feel ready for something real. I am not so keen to see us go, not that I mind any danger but I hate to think of any of our fine boys being wounded or worse. Still we all are ready for anything that comes. Ready in one sense. I wish all were ready in another.

Speaking of being ready, I have had the best religious services here I have ever had anywhere in my life. Last Sunday's was best of all too.

Good bye, Dear Father, for a little while at least. I am always thinking of you folks, more than I ever deemed I would. And when you wrote about you all thinking of me on my birthday I was pleased in a very special way. Will go to bed and like

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Another sad thing was the death of a boy in Tom's battery

the boys try to dream of home.

Lots of love,

Ben.

Addressed:

Mr. B. R. Lacy,

Raleigh,

N. C.

U.S.A.

B. R. Lacy Jr.,
Chaplain.