

WITH THE COLORS.

Y.M.C.A.

113 F. A.

A.E.F.

France

Aug 5th, 1918.

Dear Father & Mother:-

Since I "owe" each of you a letter, and since each of you are interested in the same things I am going to write another letter to you both. Last Tuesday and Wednesday were big days for the 113th for on each day we got a sack of first class mail. That which came on Tuesday was written from July 10 to July 14. That arriving Wednesday was written from June 30th to July 10th. So you see how mail comes. On my birthday, which was Tuesday I got a few more letters than on Wednesday, but I was satisfied beyond measure.

This past week did not seem to be an extra busy one, but I managed to get very little time to myself. As the time draws near when we are to go to the front things speed up a bit, and we all feel that that time is approaching. Officers and men are busy all day, and officers every night, and they both are even busy on Sunday many times. Surely I am a busy boy on Sunday.

Strange to say the last two Sundays have been almost exactly alike for me, and both have put me through the mill. Sunday a week ago I started the day with my regular service, preaching to a house full. Had a ball game arranged for the after-

noon, but had to turn the team over to Lt. Royster, B.S. Jr. and see about the funeral of an aviator, 1st Lt. who was killed Saturday evening. After supper I conducted services with Chaplain McSween at the Hospital, and afterwards spoke from the boxing and band stand down by the East Gate to a big bunch of men. I spoke better than I have on this side, I think. Well, yesterday I had a packed house for the morning service at 9:30. At 10:30 Chaplain McSween, two Y.M.C.A. preachers and an elder and myself had a communion service. They are always inspiring services, and I think do more good than our sermons.

Again I was called up for a funeral outside of regiment. Again I had scheduled a ball game and had to get Royster to take it for me. This time it was a wagoner of the Brigade Hdq. Detachment who had been injured in a runaway, and died from the effects. Our regiment furnished the caisson, band, bugler and Chaplain. Also helped to dig the grave. On top of that they sent the wild horses which had killed the man to our regiment and picked the best team we had to take their place. So we have the bad team now.

As always the service was very simple, but very impressive. I guess I shall never get used to funerals for always they affect me very much, but especially these in a foreign land. I have just finished a letter to the boy's married sister.

After supper I spoke at the Hospital to the convalescents and after that went to a Vesper Service at the Officers Club. Came back about ten o'clock and talked about "Home" with Capt. Pete Crayton.

So you see I am finding a real place for myself over here, and I do not think anyone in the regiment would like to see me in the line now. Surely I would not trade jobs with anyone in the Army, and I feel that my place will be more important as we draw near the front. The morning services are an inspiration. The singing is fine and the boys listen so remarkably well.

I don't know what the people at home are going to say and think about my Sunday Ball. I found out that all the team wanted to play and I think because I would not encourage it they held off. But when I saw conditions here I realized that it could be the greatest instrument for keeping down drinking and worse immorality, keep them also from the gnawing home sickness of Sunday which has partly led to drinking. And it seems to be having a salutary effect. Yesterday several thousands must have watched the games, and after doing that they are content to go to barrack and write letters and then a house full goes to the Y.M.C.A. at night. These last two Sundays have been remarkable for the absence of drinks and I think these games have certainly helped a little.

The officers are now coming in from the range simply drenched by this Briton rain.

Father, you said the Y.M.C.A. had been getting a black eye in the States: I can only speak for the ones I have seen and this is my conclusion. The Y.M.C.A. is not only the best, but practically the only force which is competing with wine shops and prostitutes in this part of the country. The authorities

try to keep down drinkin and vice, but that is negatively done. The "Y" tries to give entertainment and provide some place where men can relax without dissipation. As one captain here would say "I am as strong as horse-radishes for the Y.M. C.A." The buildings here are packed every night. I'll give you a little of what they do. The Army asked them to take over the canteen, and because things are so dear over here many newcomers may have thought they charged excessive prices, but anything with sugar in it is out of sight and except when the government sells from the Quarter Master Dept things are much cheaper at the "Y" than can be bought elseqhere. But now they are selling at Army prices which will be way below cost for them.

Y.M.C.A. here keeps two and three men busy during the time when the men are free from duty and then can hardly accommodate them. They are worked to death and at night after the soldiers report back to camp they have to make out their reports for the day. The soldiers begin crowding into the hut at 11:30 and it is full of men until 1:00 when they go to work again. Again at 5:00 it fills up and they do a tremendous business at the counter while every table is full of men writing, reading, and playing checkers. There are two college women in this hut and one keeps the library and gives out paper and the other sells soft drinks. Right after supper the auditorium fills up and every night they try to have some kind of entertainment. Saturday afternoon and night and all day Sunday it is packed. Wednesday night there is a religous service.

Sunday morning the place is in one mess from the night be-

fore, but early in the morning Catholic Mass is held. Then at 9:30 my service. At 10:30 a Bible class unless I have communion, and at 2:00 P.M. a Movie, at 7:30 P.M. a religious service. And all day long men reading, writing, borrowing books and getting stationary to write at home.

They have an athletic man here who has trouble getting equipment. The Germans have sunk two boats with athletic equipment on them. But he is willing to help, and but for him we would not have been able to play here at all. Soldiers are camped all around here in France and they go out in cars to these places and try to help out. They have an officers building here which is a great success.

I think you can judge from what I say what I think of the "Y" and the men and officers feel as I do. As for slackers - These "Y" men are all over the draft age, are mostly married and are never slackers. Most of them work like dogs. I can't see where they are any more slackers than any man over 31 who is in America. Of course there are slackers among them but every bunch has slackers. What I say is this. If any of you want to help our soldiers most give to the Y.M.C.A. and support it.

If at the front I find cause for adverse criticism I will write that too, for only thus can the truth be known and things be made right.

Was sorry to hear of Don Ray's death. ~~Am so sorry for Anne.~~

Was much interested in the evening prayer at Raleigh. We certainly need to seek God's favour, for these countries have suffered cruelly by this war. Surely it will not last much longer.

My love for you all is deeper and fuller than ever before. May God bless and keep you all.

Affectionately,

Ben.

Addressed:

Mr. B. R. Lacy,

Raleigh,

N. C.

U.S.A.

O.K.

B. R. Lacy Jr.
Chaplain.