

25 May 1945
Wurzburg, Germany

"-----In my last letter-story, I had just landed in Scotland. It was a huge field, with complete facilities for processing the newly-arrived. As usual, we kicked around for a while till our orders were checked and verified. And then after some donuts & coffee, and hobnobbing with a profusion of brass, we changed our good U.S. dollars & cents into pounds, shillings and pence. And tell me that English money system isn't the most mentally trying thing yet devised.

Money exchange completed, we hopped a private bus to a concrete barracks & turned in for a few hours nap. Then to chow and the Service Club for some relaxation and finally after supper, to the barracks again to prepare for the next leg of the journey. Soon after dark I was on a bus headed for the R.R. station! After a slow journey thru the blacked-out countryside (wondering all the while why the driver didn't get over onto the right side of the road) and a seemingly interminable wait at the station, I boarded a sleeper for London. The compartment was cold, and I froze that night, arising soon after day break the better to keep warm and also to watch the English landscape. Saturday morning we were in London before ten o'clock. More checking thru various bureaus, delays & bus rides before we were quartered temporarily in private houses near Hyde Park. Once turned loose we started to see as much of the town as possible, and before I turned in that night I'd seen Picadilly Circus, and Oxford Circus, the theater district, Shaftsbury Avenue, plenty of USO's & service Clubs, and had my first view of an English pub (inside). Perhaps it's the war, but the stuff those Limeys drink is horrible. Incidentally, there were some buzz bombs dropping that night, so the fellows claim, but I neither saw nor heard them.

Sunday morning we managed to scout out a church and it was none other than the magnificent structure of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri -- Cardinal Newman's church. After Mass it was chow, the Hans Crescent Service Club, and Picadilly Circus, Chow again in the Rainbow Corner Club, and a movie "The Seventh Cross" in the Empire Theatre. And so to bed.

Early Monday morning we bussed to a field outside London, and after noon chow we were off to Paris. The trip lasted under two hours, and after we crossed the Channel everyone craned their necks downward to catch their first glimpse of battle-scarred France. Our first sight of Paris was marked by the towering image of the Eiffel Tower, which could be seen long before the city limits were reached. One month after the city's liberation, we landed at a Paris airfield.

That night we were bedded down in the Claude Bernard School in the fashionable Boulougne Wood section of Paris. We slept in a downstairs gym, unaffectionately nicknamed the "Tomb" by reason of its inordinate cold & dampness. We remained in Paris about 2 weeks, during which I saw many of the scenes pictured on that series of postcards I sent you a few months ago. But still, because the subways ran irregularly and our quarters were some distance from the center

of the city, I didn't see as much of Paris as I should have liked to.

Early in October I moved to Reims and lived in an expansive house (not really a chateau) across from France's largest champagne factory. We made some little dent in the 11,000,000 bottles while there and for a time lived a rather lazy existence tramping the countryside, visiting town, playing cards and talking around the warm fireplaces at night in our rooms. After a while, however, I had to knuckle down and do some work. I attended Mass several times in the Reims Cathedral, an edifying experience, indeed.

In early November I arrived in Namur, and quartered in a private house next to the former German Gestapo HQs. The enemy was, at the time sending over beaucoup robombs, and in our inexperience we were eager to see any that passed our way, instead of seeking shelter in a sane manner. In any event we never saw any explode, though the bombing of Namur before we arrived gave us a close-hand view of devastated homes and industries.

I mentioned previously in my letters that the Belgians, insofar as such things can be measured, seemed friendlier and less deprived by the war than did the French --who were, nevertheless, no boors either.

For some unknown reason, I was moved soon after Thanksgiving to the famous Chateau a Faulx, about 15 miles south east of Namur. That was a pretty good deal, as I recall. Few details, a magnificent set of quarters, good food, wide fields and countryside, and good companionship. In all, you were the only thing lacking, honey. In sum, it amounted to a vacation. The sole twinging remembrance is of 4hrs stand of guard duty during the cold winter nights. I attended Mass in a small town $\frac{1}{2}$ mile away -- in a church of inspiring interior beauty for so poor a sector. On one occasion, we were privileged to have a Mass said in the chateau's private chapel. That was a week before Christmas and we were counting on remaining to attend Mass and spend Christmas and New Year's there. In fact we counted on an interminable stay; but the Jerries spoiled our plans. That's another story, however, and will save till another letter.