

rec'd. Mar 24



ON ACTIVE SERVICE
WITH THE
AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES

Feb 25 1919

131 st. Field Hospital.

Dear Father and Mother, Eshternack Lux.

This afternoon I sit looking out over the grounds of this old monastery. It is a dismal place indeed, and it's also raining. I could have been at liberty to go out this afternoon, but I thought best not to.

But this monastery - one of the oldest in Europe, and the most massive building I was ever in - its long halls + corridors, arched ceilings - pillars - some are 6x8 ft sq. - the immense thickness of the walls - I have not the least doubt it is the oldest one in existence, if massiveness has any thing to do with it. The figures in their bright colored robes on the walls - fine large paintings - stained glass windows, with not one glimpse on the outer world; just the court + yard of the monastery. All stairs are of stone and greatly worn by years of service - and when I look at the ricks of desks + seats stored away in anterooms while it is being used as a hospital - I think God pity those thousands of little children that have been sent here these hundreds of years - to be confined in this solitary, dismal

old prison, nothing to see but the grim walls
of another part of the convent across the grounds.
The brownish grey color of it is depressive
to an older one, not saying what it must be
to a child who knows its only chance to get
out is when they are formed in a column of 2's
and taken out our town for exercise, under
the guardship of a half dozen or more men.
The hooks on the wall for their caps + cloaks -
each numbered - how military. Where do
you suppose those little hearts could find
sympathy in this stone pile - organized and
conducted as this system is. If they were
taught to pray from the heart instead of by
form, what do you suppose some of their
prayers and supplications would sound
like. When I look back over the freedom
of my childhood - what a contrast from
these, with a watching eye + ruling - down -
inering hand over the head continually,
hardly knowing what sports are, quiet
as a tomb, fearful to make the least
annoyance lest they become subject to
chastisement from the superiors and
place them selves in the ill will of the
saints, which in their estimation would
be quite disastrous. I not only thank
god for my freedom of youth, but of thought,
especially in religion. I hope America
wakes up before she finds her self in
just such a net as this and most cer -
tainly will be her destination if the people
do not come to in time to save themselves.



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My experience here has been one quite to the contrary of what ¹⁹¹ has just described. On Fri 21, my fever was 102 - so the doctor evacuated me. That same day I rec'd a letter from Cecil of Jan 31, and was expecting one from you. Probably have one now at my company. I arrived here Fri night by ambulance; examined - given a white mask to wear over my nose - for the flu - and dressed in a suit of pajamas and given a bed with fourteen inch spring mattress, "beautifully" white sheets + plenty of blankets. I had three days + three nights solid comfort. The pain in my back was one more of rheumatism in my shoulder blade than any thing I know. I have been quite normal in pulse + temperature all the time and am quite caught up in my sleep. Ready for every meal and any thing else we are able to get into the hospital. On the 24th we were put in this convalescent ward. Here we are at ease all the time to do nearly as we wish. Only a few here + its real quiet. go to bed when you please + get up when you please - meals brot. to you. Breakfast in bed - in the army. The impossible has happened - now it would not surprise me to hear we are going to be sent home, for when the impossible begins to be possible - then look out.

I am wondering if you get all my letters lately and if you do - what you think of them and my state of mind - do you fear for my total loss of sanity? your fears are not groundless if you do. Physically I am all right - will be going to company in a day or so - and really no need of me coming as I did but am thankful for these few days of quiet and rest and to get away from that military atmosphere. 3 years is quite enough to satisfy me for a life time. I'll never make a peace time soldier.

The sketch is of the room I was in the first three days. my bed was just about where the square line marked on the floor is - by the big pillar.

This is how the room looked to me as I copied it while I lay there. a row of beds down each side and a row in the center.

Plenty of room for the thing is enormous. cream and pea green is the color it is finished in.

The whole institution is made up in exactly this manner. heavy and solemn. gives you a feeling of darkness and mystery, rather than one of light and knowledge. I am seeing more of these countries and their prevailing religion than I ever care to see again any place, and when I think to what extent this detestable institution of darkness has fastened its claws into our people & how lenient they are to its two faced underhand way of working - God - you fear for the future. Hoping a letter is waiting me with the band - I am your loving son - Hoping for your best health - ~~Paul~~ Paul, B Kendrickson, Indg, Co 1 & 9 8/4 A.E. 7

