

Sept 19, 1918

Dear Mother,

After another long wait mail has arrived and I received your two letters of Aug 20 and Pa's postal all of which contained the welcome news that you were taking a vacation. I am glad of that for it will do you both good and also glad you got mine of July 29th telling about going back to billets so you won't be worrying about me while you are away. Well we did get back to billets as the later letters you probably got while away will show but good things never last and we have been living in woods for two weeks or more and I haven't had much chance to write and could not tell where I was or what I was doing.

Well we've been in an out of another drive and had more fun than any time since we've been over here. The first day we were in reserve but that night they got the Huns going to the rear double time and we were called up to chase them and it was some chase. It had been raining steady for a week and we hadn't been able to sleep very well on the ground as everything was damp and cold and we were tired when we started. We could see the sky all red in the distance and knew that as usual they were burning everything as they went. Well we started out up the road after them. My platoon acted as advance guard for the regiment and went some distance ahead of the main body. We walked and walked and walked some more. The road went through the woods most all the way and we had to watch out that we didn't walk into a trap. But I guess they were thinking more of getting away than setting traps. We passed two abandoned auto trucks first then some distance more and we came upon four more. As we approached six Boche jumped out and ran into the woods and we kept going. We heard afterwards that men in the rear caught them. We walked five or six hours and didn't catch up to anyone and it was getting along towards two o'clock in the morning. We had been going uphill for some time and at last came to the crest and about half a mile ahead was a town all ablaze. We skirmished out and approached it. We were on a high ridge and could see for miles on each side and as far as we could see was a line of burning villages. It was certainly a pretty site but it was too bad to destroy all those villages but that is the way of the Boche. Well we got to the village and found not a soul. It was quite cold and we stood around awhile and warmed ourselves at different fires. Then we started out again after a short rest and went

down the hill towards a burning village on the right. We stopped about a hundred yards away and an officer and five men entered the village to reconnoiter. We were dead tired and most of us went to sleep. Some time later the patrol returned and reported that the place was deserted. We started to enter half asleep and then something happened that made us all forget that we were tired—something that made us go without sleep for quite a few hours more and not mind it. Some officers went first on horse back and just as we were getting inside the village one of them came riding back yelling “Come on quick, double time everybody!” We ran forward up the street, turned a corner and there with five or six men holding them up were a couple hundred Boche with their hands up in the air. “Come on” someone yelled, “and we’ll get a whole wagon train.” All F Company came up on the double quick and in half a minute we had them all surrounded—about two hundred men and a whole bunch of wagons piled high with stuff. It was more like a wild and wooly moving picture than anything else. There was a long street with long lines of two and three story houses going up in smoke and in the middle of the street all those Boche scared to death and with their hands up in the air and our fellows acting like wild Indians rounding them up. All the fellows say they had the time of their lives. We marched them all down to a building that wasn’t burning and turned them in—172 in the first bunch. Then we started out in small bunches to scour the town. We entered all the houses which were not burning (about half were not) and found a lot more hiding under beds and some in bed pretending they were asleep. We kept finding more and more until the whole village had been thoroughly searched. We got about three hundred altogether including a band who had all their instruments with them, base [sic] drum and all. They seemed perfectly willing to surrender and we got the whole bunch without losing a man. By the time they were all rounded up it was daylight and then we started out hunting for souvenirs etc. The town, we discovered when it was light, was one we used to see from our trenches on the Toul front. It was one I used to watch while on the observation post job. We had come in on an angle and cut off the retreat of a large number of troops by meeting our forces who came in on the other side. That is how we got the wagon train. They were just going through the town to go to the rear when we entered from the side and got them. We found ourselves in back of Mont Sec by several miles a place which while we were in the trenches at Seicheprey we thought would

never be taken except with a big loss of life and much fighting. And here we were in back of it with hundreds of prisoners immense quantities of all sorts of supplies and materials and hadn't lost a man. You should have seen the way they had that town fixed up. They were certainly living a life of comfort and ease. All the houses were fixed up for the men and the officers were living in the larger + better houses with big beds, fine furniture, pianos and all the comforts of home and none of the expenses. Our cooks got a lot of potatoes, turnips, sugar, rice and tea. You know I never liked tea. Well we had it for breakfast yesterday morning and I drank three cups of it + our mess cups are no dainty affairs but hold about a pint. It was certainly good tea. One of our cooks (who used to work in the Hfd Market) said it was the best tea you could buy and said it would bring \$5.00 a pd. in the States. I don't know where the Boche got it but we enjoyed it anyway. We had soup also yesterday noon made of captured turnips and cabbage. I had a good feed of nice ripe tomatoes another fellow and I found in one house. And the salt was right on the table waiting for us. We got a lot of good horses too all of which are working for the U.S. now. All the fellows loaded up with souvenirs which they are already starting to get rid of. Souvenirs are nice but are a nuisance to carry. The rest of our regiment scattered over the surrounding country and I guess we got about 5000 prisoners in our regiment alone. We certainly had a great time and all our tiredness disappeared until it was all over and then it was daylight and I slept about two hours and then it was dinner time and I got up and didn't feel sleepy enough to go to bed again until that night. [Illegible] about that night but there are a big bunch of letters going through today as no one has written in some time so I've got to have pity on the censor. I'll tell you more about it next time I write. We're not doing anything now—just eating + sleeping and I'm feeling fine. The rain has quit and we've had sun for a week almost. Well I was glad to hear you are away + suppose I'll be getting more mail soon. Well goodbye for now—will write soon again.

As ever

Your loving son

Charles