

Sunday Afternoon. 10/21/17.

Dear Home Folks.-

Another week has gone by and not a letter has reached me from any source. It does seem queer and also a bit disappointing, but probably the mail is held up somewhere. Some day it will come all in a bunch.

The Germans built a little summer house in the front yard when they were here and I'm sitting in it now writing. It is built of solid sticks about eight inches in diameter and is hidden from aeroplane view by being stuck under a big spreading lilac bush. I can look out over the delapidated flower gardens, over the two German graves marked by a wooden cross, and see the ruins of the barn and walls on every side. It is a sickening sight to see so many piles of broken bricks and rafters sticking barely up in the air, but such is this little town. It is almost hopeless to think of repairing a town and even more hopeless to think of the thousands of towns worse off than this one, with not a brick standing three feet high. We are only given heart when we realize that the roof we patched last week will keep the rains off the bed of a family for the first time since the bombardment in 1914. and to think that we can do a similar thing next week. It isn't much when looked at from the standpoint of the whole of the wreckage, but it is worthwhile to be working and accomplishing some thing.

Sample letter from Edwin Zavitz



**Edwin Zavitz's Letters:
Living In the Spirit of Peace,
Relief Work in France during World War I**

Introduction by Jane Zavitz-Bond

Edwin Zavitz (1892-1950) served in France during World War One as a member of the 1917 American contingent with London Yearly Meeting's Friends War Victims Relief Committee (FWVRC) as the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) began. His letters home reveal a young man rooted in his Quaker heritage and his life experiences, both of which led Edwin to choose peace, not war.

The Coldstream Friends Meeting community in southwestern Ontario, settled after 1840, included young men who

responded to the calls to war in various ways. George Mabley went to prison rather than to register, as required, and then seek conscientious objector status, believing it was beyond the government's right to control his faith. The relief work was supported by the Meeting and non-Quaker neighbours with funds collected and forwarded to Philadelphia. Every penny was recorded and well-spent.

All those living at Sunnyside, Jonah Daniel and Emily Cornell Zavitz's farm home on Lobo's 10th concession, eagerly

read Edwin's letters. He read theirs when far away in the Somme battle zone at the little village of Gruny. Marguerite Haight Zavitz preserved and passed the letters to me. My husband, Paul Zavitz, spent nearly two years, between the ages of three and five, in Edwin's home. After World War Two Paul followed his Uncle Edwin's footsteps doing relief work in Poland, rebuilding farm homes that had been destroyed during the war. Friends used seconded UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) trucks and major funds. Their lives changed as Young Friends sailed on a troop ship and worshipped each day in the empty, circular gun turret (perfect for meeting), seeking peace, not war in their lives.

Now nearly one hundred years later devastation from war is still with us. The humanity and needs of all people remain to be met. Edwin found worth in repairing homes and allowing life to continue within the sounds of battle. To redo when destruction came again was right for him. He repaired the school and shared with the village children of Gruny. His subsequent life was spent teaching in order to improve the lives of students, and subsequently the world. He had left Sidwell Friends School in Washington, D.C. to go to France, and

found his calling re-enforced while there. Life is full and fulfilling, when we choose to make it so. Edwin did. Many lives have been enhanced from his life of service to education. Zavitz Middle School at Sidwell is named in his honour.



Edwin Zavitz

Read and enter into the world of a century ago as you meet a young man, his family, and his friends across a sea that is not a barrier to their love and care for one another. The letters remind each of us to live each day in the Light of the Presence.

We plan to include letters from 1918 and 1919 in the next issue of the *Canadian Quaker History Journal*. Much appreciation is due to Sheila Havard for transcribing these letters, and to Joyce Holwerda for adapting the pdf file to publication needs.

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SIDWELLS' FRIENDS SCHOOL
1809 1 STREET
WASHINGTON, D.C.

July 15. 1917.

Dear Home Folks. —

Just to show that I'm not too busy today to think of you I am going to write. I'm not back in Washington at the Friends School as the paper might indicate. I'm just out of

paper that's all. I really am in Phila today visiting some very fine friends of mine and having a very good time. I just remarked that I'd like to write a hundred letters today because I am in such a good humor.

Next Tuesday we go to Haverford to begin our training. We will be busy enough there I guess. But it will be wonderful experience. I can hardly wait for Tuesday to come.

I finished my stay at Gwynedd last Friday evening. Things were really in better shape than when I went there a couple of weeks ago and I am hoping they will continue to be improving. There has been ~~illegible~~ an abundance of rain the last week so now if it comes warm and dry there will be pretty rapid growth in the potato field. They have 12 acres of potatoes that are just coming up and a few acres of sweet corn and lima beans.

I guess you thought my last letter was rather abruptly ended. I was called away to do something and had to end it abruptly. I am glad to hear about the building and to know that it is getting along so well. The barn must look fine now. Is the new roof on it yet? I am sorry not to be there with you and able to help do all these things but my summer's plans surely have been changed a great deal since June.

I wonder where Aunt Jennie is. I am afraid to write to her because I do not know where to reach her. Perhaps she is at home now. She said something about giving up her Sherbrooke trip. If she has she probably is home. That will be a good visit for her to make some time in the future.

I have heard so many charming things said about my Aunt Jennie since I have been down here around Phila this month and last. When a person leaves a community it is then that their friends run the risk of spoiling them with compliments. Going to France is a bad experience in that

respect. I have had lots of such splendid letters from my good friends which are so numerous.

I have never been happier in my life than I am this moment and life never before has seemed so fine before me. I wish I could step in and see you all this afternoon but I will and am thinking of you and send my love to you all.

Edwin.

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Friends Reconstruction Unit
Haverford. Pa.
7-19-17.

Dear Home Folks –

Since we got here last Tuesday noon I have had such a little time to myself that I haven't got to your letter.

We are really started on our training and it is great. To see a hundred brown faced men in kahki swinging down a road in perfect formation and step you would hardly think of them as Quakers. But such we are and such is the appearance of the unit on a hike such as we have just come in from.

Our uniforms are kahki shirts and pants with military shoes and puttees and regular military hat. We have these uniforms, not because they are military but because they are good and suit our purpose. They are uniforms of the Emergency Unit of the U.S. Army which we have purchased for purpose of training. Our own will be made soon and we will use them when we go abroad.

In order to have any order on our hikes we have had to learn some regular formations and movements which we use with the men on the march. I have been made a leader probably because my experience in teaching such work makes it

easy for me to fall in with it. We are divided into squads of 8 men and there are 100 of us here nearly.

I'm awfully sorry but was interrupted

Am too busy now to write but will send this. more later.

Love Edwin

§

Friends Reconstruction Unit
Haverford. Pa.
7-22-17.

Dear Home Folks –

Your letter reached me yesterday. Thanks very much for the papers. The birth certificate may suit and it may have to be made out by the Township Clerk. Would that be possible. Could the present township clerk do that? If it wouldn't be too much trouble I wish it might be done and forwarded. While you are doing that have it made in duplicate please because I may need to use both copies at once. I'm returning a copy of the other certificate which I wish you would have signed as I need two. One to send to Wash. And one here. I'll send more later.

Edwin

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On Board Rochambeau. 8/9/17.
First Day. P.M. 2.00.

9/12/17

Voyage progressing fine. Everything OK
Love to you. E.

Dear Folks at Home. –

It seems like a long way to send a letter back to you from the middle of the Atlantic, but it will be farther away than ever before we get to Bordeaux and can post

some mail back to America. It certainly seems strange to think of being somewhere not in America. To speak of back in America does seem at least novel. But it's true and I don't like to think how long it will be before I will not be able to refer to U.S.A. in that manner.

I hardly know where to begin in writing a letter to you. I am surely in another part of the world now and things are so changed. I guess I'll just roam along in my thought and perhaps I will run across something interesting to you.

We sailed from New York last Tuesday evening about 7.30. It was a beautiful evening. As we pulled out of the port I went up on deck all alone and climbed up on a life raft and hung there in the breeze thinking goodbye to all the ones I love in America. The color of sunset was still in the West but the moon and stars were out to add to the beauty of the whole situation. We sailed out of New York Harbor, with the familiar picture of the New York skyscrapers all lighted and shining like a mountain of crystal on one side and the beautiful Statue of Liberty shining on the other side. As darkness lowered, the lights and the monument drew gradually back farther and farther, but with us always the Heavens, the moon and Stars kept constant, and altho we were leaving our own land.

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29/9/17.

We were still moving and will always be where we can see the same moon and the same familiar groups of stars. They will always make us at home no matter where we are

It was an impressive departure for me. When we were well out of the Harbor I went down to the Salon and wrote a final letter



The Zavitz family of Sunnyside, Conc. 10, Lobo: from left to right, Jonah Daniel (father), Edwin, Russell, Helen, Clara (standing), Emily Cornell (mother).

of goodbye which was carried back by the pilot about an hour after.

The next morning when we arose at six we went out on deck but no land could be seen and we were truly out on the high seas bound for an unknown land and have been steadily steaming ahead without any change ever since. We have seen a couple of ships pass. one on Friday and one this morning but they have been five or six miles away and didn't even speak as they passed.

Wednesday morning after breakfast I began to feel queer and in an hour or two I was really seasick and remained so until Friday evening when I recovered almost as suddenly as I had succumbed. During those three days I surely did feel queerly. I couldn't eat in the dining room and was miserable unless I was on my back in my cabin. When I was in bed I felt all right and had an appetite. So I had some meals in bed

and enjoyed them but as soon as I tried to move around I was sick. I appreciated the humor of the situation but seemed helpless to do any thing about it. I couldn't read nor think nor write with any sense so I just existed and talked French to the Steward until Friday evening when I accidentally got into a bunch of fooling and playing on deck and in spite of myself and before I knew it I was feeling all right and didn't mind the rolling of the boat at all. I've been splendid ever since and have enjoyed everything on board ever since.

We have had good weather all the time. Friday we passed through a storm but the wind was not very bad and altho it rained nearly all day it wasn't bad enough to cause much trouble of any sort. Mostly the sun has been shining and it has been delightful on deck. (When one is not sea sick.)

The Rochambeau is a splendid boat. She

is the best boat on this line and seems to be pretty fine. There are about 240 on board all told but the boat is so large that one would hardly think there were so many. Every day we see new faces on deck. I suppose they are just getting their sea legs. Our cabins are very comfortable and spacious. We have hot and cold running water in each cabin and a chance for a salt water bath whenever you can find enough French to arrange it with the Steward of the Bath. I have had mine every day just when I wanted it. The deck is real long - I guess nearly 100 yards and there are steamer chairs all along the wall. It is covered and makes a good place to walk in any sort of weather. There are no first class passengers. We are second class and there are nearly 100 steerage passengers in the stern. They are Armenians & Greeks and we enjoy watching them do all sorts of dances on their deck every day.

There is a large dining room, a large reading and writing room with piano etc and a smoking room. Here where I am now in the Salon de Conversation there are many things going on all the time. People steal up to the piano and bashfully run over the scales for a while then as they grow bolder they play and sing beautifully. One young man has just finished playing and singing beautifully. It may be a bit distracting to letter writing but is none the less enjoyable. In the evening when some good music is struck up dancers appear and we have lots of fun trying to dance with the roll of the boat.

Our Unit of course (54 of us) ~~are~~ is a big part of the passengers. We have a certain amount of routine to go thru with because we cannot lose such valuable time as this is. We rise at six, go out on deck for a setting up drill and after our baths have breakfast at 7.00. We do not talk a word of English until after 11.00 o' clock. There is a

French class from 9.00 to 10.00 when we have to talk French. Usually we stir up a conversation with some French person on board and bore them to death. Lunch is at 10.30 (queer isn't it.) Another French class at 3.00. Dinner at 5.30. and a meeting together at 7.00. Bed at 10.00. These rules are carried out strictly. It is necessary because we must keep the men well under discipline and must acquire French. I am one of the Squad leaders and also have charge of the Physical Direction of the Unit. I appreciate the place I have been given and hope I can prove worthy as a leader.

We are certainly getting French pretty fast. I am surprised how easily it comes. When we get to Bordeaux we will be able to talk French all right. In fact now I can carry on a conversation with a French person who knows no English and say anything I want to after a fashion. Of course it isn't very polished French, but I can make myself understood. The way we do it is to talk all the time whenever we get a chance. This morning I went down to the barber shop and talked French to the barber for nearly an hour. I talk to the Steward and to any of the servants I can find also there are several French passengers with whom I have made an acquaintance and from whom I quite often draw a French lesson. Of course to be able to do our work in France we must know French and this voyage is a good place and time to get it.

We are sailing with all war precautions. Every night there are no lights at all on deck and all the windows and port holes are covered over with heavy curtains. We sail entirely dark. It seems spooky but apparently it is necessary for safety. We have guns mounted fore and aft and at night the gunners are on deck all time walking up and down. There are three men in the crows nest keeping watch and in all it is quite

serious when one stops to think. but as we sail along we hardly think of submarines [illegible].¹ the blackwart voyage and illegible four illegible it illegible were not illegible. Don't be alarmed. If this reaches you we will have arrived safely because we can't mail anything for nearly a week yet. We are told now that we will probably get to Bordeaux Friday night or Sat. morning next. We are going out of somewhere ahead.

The personnel of the passengers in very interesting. Nearly everyone on board is in some way bound on a mission for service in France. There are some Y.M.C.A. men aboard who are going over in service at army camps. Also we have an Ambulance Unit and a Red Cross Unit. There are several Red Cross nurses and some women who are going over on independent services such as caring for refugee children at the Frontier. This afternoon I was talking to a young woman from Phila. a Miss Strawbridge. who is going over to French Hospitals. Every day we discover new people who are mighty much worth while knowing and I suppose the time will be all too short when we realize how wonderful a group of people we really have on board.

This morning we had a Y.M.C.A. service at which about a half dozen preachers assisted. There was a splendid sermon preached by George Wood Anderson. Before the Y.M.C.A. service there was a high mass celebrated by two Franciscan Friars on board. One of them is the Father General of all the Franciscans of the world. He is a genial old gentleman and has talked French with us several times. He has been in America to see the Franciscan orders and is now returning to Rome.

This afternoon we had a service of our own and it was a very valuable one. The 54

young men bent on a serious mission as we are, could not help but have a good meeting. We are developing a devotion for our work which we need and which will help to carry us through a great many hardships. Our lives are really in the hands of a Higher Power and we are ready to do whatever we see fit and to render service wherever we can.

Now good night dear ones for tonight. I hope you are well and happy. I wish I could hear from you often, but it will be a long time before I do. My love to you always.

cut off

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Tuesday, P.M. 8-28-17.

Dear Home Folks. —

Isn't it a shame that we can't get more letter writing done this summer. There are so many things that I would like to know about from you and if I had the occasion I know I could write interesting letters to you.

The one thing that the men of the Unit have been occupied with this week and last has been getting passports and draft affairs arranged. It is a mighty hard thing for a man of military age to get a passport now to leave the country. Some of the group of men who were to have sailed over two days ago have not got their passports yet. The other day I thought it was about time for me to begin to get after mine so I went down to the British Consulate in Phila and asked for a passport. They said they would give me one if I had my birth Certificate. Of course I had a copy with me and presented it. In a couple of days from the time I began to inquire I had a passport in my pocket. There were reservations made

¹ Transcriber's note: The illegible sections are erased by marker. Possible censorship?

on the Chicago which was scheduled to sail Monday the 27th, so when I got my passport on Sat. they asked me to sail with the early group. I had my things all ready and would have gone had I not wanted pretty much to go with Jess & Ellwood. so I persuaded them to let me wait until next sailing. About two men sailed or are sailing today as the boat did not get off until [5.00] P.M. today.

The rest of us or as many as can get passports, and I have mine, sail Saturday on the Rochambeau from New York. We have made 50 reservations and hope to have as many ready. I am all ready to go. That is in my packing etc. as I was prepared for the other boat. We are taking with us personally, two pieces of baggage one suit case, and one Duffle bag. The Duffle bag is a big oil cloth bag or roll which will hold an unlimited amount. In mine I have one folding cot, two blankets, a uniform, two pairs of shoes, three suits of heavy underclothes, several suits of light underwear Pajamas – heavy socks and a few other things. We do not take more than we will need because we have to carry it all by hand. The Duffle bag when packed weighs nearly 100 lbs so we won't want to carry it far or put more than we need in it.

This week we are studying French what time we have and are getting passports and baggage matters ready. You can imagine it takes a lot of work to get all packing done for a group of 100 men who are taking with them food for 3 months and machinery and equipment for our work in France. I have been making huge packing boxes all day for material to go abroad. They are made of heavy inch pine boards screwed together and weigh about 150 or 200 lbs each themselves.

In our spare hours Ellwood, Jesse and I have been spending some pretty good times on little picnics in the woods near Phila.

Carolyn Hutton has come East for a couple of weeks before Ellwood sails and is staying at Marions. and Mary Panscoat is in town with Sundays free. Consequently we have enjoyed being in a party as often as we can. Jess + Ellwood of course are pretty anxious to see as much of their girls as they can before they sail to France and I of course have to chaperone them.

We have had a splendid summer as far as weather is concerned. There hasn't been a day when we have been held up because of rain and only for a few days has it been so hot that we have been very uncomfortable.

Our permanent address will be in care of Friends' War Victims Relief Hotel Britannique, 20 Victoria Ave. Paris. France. Mail will be forwarded from there. I'll try to write again before I sail but I don't suppose I'll hear from you.

Lovingly. Edwin.

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COMPAGNIE GÉNÉRALE
TRANSATLANTIQUE
NEW YORK – HAVRE – PARIS
19 STATE STREET

FRENCH LINE

TELEPHONE BROAD 4900.
NEW YORK, Tuesday 9/4/17. 11.30 A.M.

Dear Home Folks. –

We are in New York ready to sail tonight. There are 54 of us in the group eager and consecrated to get at the work for which we have been preparing. It was an impressive procession this morning when we all lined up at six o'clock and said goodbye to some who are left behind. Then marched to the station. One could easily sense the seriousness of the situation and the earnestness of the group and those of

us that are in it feel an assurance of strength and conviction that our work will be worth while.

I feel very sorry dear people that I have been unable to write oftener and more fully this summer. I know it may make you feel that I hadn't tried to get the usual letters off. But please realize how different my summer has been and my plans for the future than they were in June. My whole life has been changed, as it were because I have made several momentous decisions. But I feel I have in front of me some wonderful experiences and hope that when the time comes for me to come back and begin work again here. I will be better qualified to fill whatever position I may find open.

I don't feel like writing at much length about the details of our training. You can hear from different sources what is actually going on. What I do want you to know is that life never meant more to me than it does today and that I am confident that I am a bigger and a stronger man because of the big things that are ahead of me challenging me to bigger things.

I hope you all are well and joyous. We all need to be joyous. I will write more when I can but it will be three weeks or a month before you get it. Your letters will always mean a lot.

§

COMPAGNIE GÉNÉRALE
TRANSATLANTIQUE
NEW YORK – HAVRE – PARIS
19 STATE STREET

FRENCH LINE

TELEPHONE BROAD 4900.
NEW YORK

and especially so when we are homesick and

worn somewhere in France. Our permanent address is

Friends' War Victims Relief
Hotel Britannique,
20 Victoria Ave.
Paris.

I hardly realize I'm on the verge of sailing to France for such an indefinite and wonderful mission. But here I am in the waiting room, surrounded by sad farewells and already homesick men bent over letters or with head buried in hand in thought. I'm not homesick but I do leave this country and those dear to me with a lot of feeling and prayers that we may all soon meet again safe and well and happy.

Farewell, dear ones, farewell,

Edwin –

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Philadelphia. Pa
Monday Evening

Dear Home Folks –

Did you get the letter I wrote from Ann Arbor? I had a splendid visit there. Miss McGregor recalled so many good times we had had during the three years of college life. She was awfully cordial and inquired for mother and Russell. I gave her some apples which she thought were pretty good. The evening before I left she had a little dinner party and I showed my pictures to the people of the house. It was a splendid audience about the most interested people I had ever talked to.

The trip down to Phila was long and a little tiresome all alone. I got here Sat night about 8.30. Marion was at the station to meet me and I came up to her place for a little while. The Friends Arch St Center had a room for me so I am staying there.

The suitcase full of eatables made a

great impression. Marion and the boys were awfully glad to get the things. Yesterday we had a day of the goodies. For breakfast we made cakes and had sausage. Maybe sometime Marion will drop you a note and tell you how they liked the things. At dinner time they sampled the rest of the contents. The chicken was delicious. Marion stuffed and baked it and made splendid gravy. Among her many accomplishments she can cook splendidly and when she had such raw materials as dried corn, mustard pickles, chicken and fried cakes. You can just guess imagine we had a good time. The three boys were very loud in their praises of the pickles, corn etc. I told them they would have to run over to your place during some Ann Arbor vacation and get fed up.

The two oldest boys are going to leave for Ann Arbor next Monday. They are delighted with the prospects of their college work.

I was down at Friends Central school this morning and saw Mr. Rex. He was asking about thee Aunt Jennie and wondered when thee was coming down to Phila. Miss Wallace told Marion that she wanted me to call and talk to Mr. Rex about a position in F.C.S. She told me about it this morning, but I haven't made any promises at all. She wants a man for physics + chemistry and could make a place for me right away. I also had a letter from Mr. Sidwell today and he wants me considerably by the way he wrote. He said he wanted me to develop the plans we have had in our minds for some time in regard to the Outdoor work of the school. I am going down to Wash. Thursday and will have a talk with him.

I wish I had a chance to talk it over with you at home. Aunt Jennie would thee advise me changing from Wash. to F.C.S. Mr. Rex asked if I would accept \$1800 a year. I made no promise because I don't know

what propositions Mr. Sidwell will have to make. But it doesn't seem as though I would go idle for lack of a place to work.

Marion hasn't been so very well for the past week, but has been better since yesterday. It will be a bit easier for her when the two boys are gone to Ann Arbor. She needs a good change and a rest. She is coming down to Wash. as soon cut off get away and we will study the situation together.

Tonight we are going out to the Jacksons for a call. Miss Bertie Wilson is there and we will be glad to see her.

Dinner is ready as Marion announces. It's wonder I haven't been helping her. You can consider yourself rather lucky to be getting written to.

But I must go now. Love to you all

Edwin.

§

Paris Sept. 17. 1917

Dear Home Folks –

After a very good voyage we landed at Bordeaux Friday evening about six o'clock. Bordeaux is about 40 miles or more up the river Girou and we had to lay at anchor outside the river until the tide came in and we could come up the river and you can imagine how relieved we felt to be safely in from the ocean. The river at some places is only very narrow so we passed very near real land. We could see the grape fields and peasants plowing with oxen. The country is was very beautiful. It looked so green and fresh and there were many pretty houses along the river front as well as a few large chateaux.

Landing at Bordeaux was quite an event. There were about 54 of us. We were divided in squads and we moved in squads. Our baggage was the biggest part of us.

Each fellow had to carry a suit case and his duffle bag which weighed about 80 lbs, just big rolls with a strap handle. I put mine right up on one shoulder and had one hand free for the suit case. We had to climb down a big gang plank to the dock with all our bags and baggage and felt exactly as a bunch of immigrants looks when they reach New York. But we were in France and before we knew it we were rushed across the city and were landed at a station where we took a train for Paris. We managed to get some lunch at the station and lined up where the Red Cross gave us a lunch wrapped in paper for breakfast. We all piled in a third class train, with funny compartments and pulled out for Paris at 10.30. It was crowded and not very airy but we slept over each other and in one way or another managed to pass the night. It was about 8.30 when we got to Paris and we were a funny looking bunch. We can sympathize now with Italians etc.

On our train for Paris and in our compartments were a couple of French soldiers returning to the front. We talked with them a lot. One fellow was very gay. He thought we were English and shook hands with all the fellows. But when we said we were Americans he nearly went wild and began kissing the fellows on both cheeks. He went the rounds because we were not able to stop him. He said we were brothers now and were part of each other. It was amusing to see his deep feeling. The other fellow told a little about his charge when he lead 38 men to an attack and brought back eleven. His face was set in a crazy man's look almost when he talked. –

Our lunches were queer. There were 4 large biscuits which we could scarcely crack with our teeth, a box of sardines, a little canned beef and some chocolate and a big bottle of funny tasting carbonated lemonade. It was interesting trying to eat it,

but it tasted good.

When we got to Paris we met some English Friends who came here to meet us. They conducted us to a hotel where we are staying until we can get all our papers and can get assigned to whatever work we are going to do. It may mean we stay here for two weeks or more because there is a great deal of red tape to go through but when we are not doing something with the police or Red Cross we can see Paris, which is some opportunity.

Saturday evening the English Friends held a reception for us and told us about some of the work that we are to do. We are going to be merged with the English Friends and are to use their reputation with the French government. We will be dispatched to some part of France as soon as we can get our uniforms and our papers etc. Some will go to farming work, others to Hospitals and others to work in building etc.. I do not know where I will be but am ready to do anything.

Now, Paris is surely some city. Of course it is at war and we see everywhere the saddest signs of war. There are hundreds of soldiers of all kinds on the streets – We do not see a young man in civil uniform. All are soldiers and many are wounded or deformed. The women are nearly all in black and women have taken the places of men. Women conductors on cars, women chauffeurs, women in railroad offices and women porters and baggage men in skirts. All such things make one realize that Paris is at war.

There are also hundreds of military autos here. They seem to run back + forth from the front and they show wear. The autos go at breakneck speed here. There seems to be no speed laws. They saw the one who gets hit pays the fine for being in the way.

At our hotel there are no men in

evidence except our own unit. All the work is done by women. We have good beds but no bathroom with water. There are days when we can get a warm bath in a room in the cellar but only on some days. Also we have meatless days and sugarless days but on the whole food seems about as cheap here as in New York or Phila. We buy things by the pound. I bought a pound of apples for 4 cents and got five of them.

This afternoon Jess Packer and I have been out seeing Paris and looking for some plaster Paris bandage for one of the fellows with a swollen ankle. It was a bit hard to make that all known with our poor French but we found our way around and really bought what we wanted. Also made arrangements to have an X-ray photograph taken of the bad ankle. It took a lot of new French to do all that.

We saw this afternoon as we went about, the Eiffel Tower. The Chamber of Deputies and all the big Public buildings, several Red Cross Hospitals filled with wounded and many of the wonderful Avenues and Boulevards such as Avenue de Champs Elyses et beaucoup comme ca.

Sunday we went over to Versailles. There was a special day there and there were thousands in the grounds. Versailles is as Auntie will ~~not~~ tell you I think, is the old home of the Royalty of France. The grounds and buildings are immense and the fountains, woods and lakes are wonderful. The people [we] interesting too. I never saw before so many uniforms. There must have been two hundred different kinds of army men from all parts of the world except Germany.

We will be here for some time. Love to you all. We will be glad to hear from you.

Edwin

Our new address is.
name

F.W.V.R.C.

A.P.O. S.5

B.E.F.

France

It's queer but it's all right + 2 cents will bring a letter from you.

§

Address: F.W.V.R.C.

Just like that

A.P.O. S.5

Two cents from America

B.E.F.

France

Paris. Oct. 1. 1917.

My dear Aunt Jennie.-

If thee is still at Sunnyside thee has been hearing the home letters that I have written. Realizing that thee would get that news I have not written individually to thee until now but tonight I feel as though I would like to have an old fashioned chat with thee.

I was extremely glad to hear of thy California plan and hope it will materialize. Thee has chosen a splendid travelling companion. Thee is fond of Maria Haight isn't thee? It seems to me I have heard thee speak appreciatively of her several times. I could imagine no finer scheme for the winter and I do hope it turns out well.

Doesn't it seem strange not to be going back to school and beginning another year? Thee must think of F.C.S. and Phila many many times these days, and I have no doubt there are many in Phila who miss thy regular return. When I was in the Y.F.A. this summer I always heard the same story - - 'how much we will miss Miss Jennie!' Thy California trip will be something to take the place of the old change in the fall and I hope and am sure it will be a delightful experience.

It seems strange to me not to be getting

ready for school work too. I shall miss it enormously even though there are many interesting things ahead of me this winter. I regret that I will not be living in the atmosphere of a school with its refinements and good sociability, but this year seems necessarily different and I trust will not be poorly spent.

Trite as it may sound. I am really not able to be really conscious of the fact that this really is Paris and that we are here for three weeks or so just to see the city, or rather with nothing else to do but to see the city. No doubt in years to come I will regret that I have not been doing more running about, but I have accomplished about all I have been able to. The worst of it is I haven't any real good friends with whom I would prefer to sightsee.

As usual I regret that I do not know more French history. We are all going to read French history this winter. Then we can understand better some of the things we are seeing now.

The museums, the churches and the wonderful gardens in Paris are what impress me most. Paris is old and age is beautiful and fascinating in these churches and buildings. Notre Dame. Sacres Cours. [sic] St. Chapelle. St. Sulpice and others are all wonderful old cathedrals or churches that almost take away one's breath to think how wonderfully constructed they are to have stood so long.

The Louvre. The Luxemburg. The Pantheon. Hotel des Invalides. Palais Royal all of these are museums in which we have seen the most wonderful things of all sorts. The best exhibitions of Art of course are not here now but there are those sufficiently wonderful to excite a great deal of wonder and admiration.

The gardens of the Tuleries, Bois de Boulogne. Jardin des Plantes etc afford all the chance I want to feast my eyes on

flowers and artificial beauty in Nature. The size of them is what gets me. I thought Washington was open and gardens large but Paris goes Washington two or three better.

Besides we have visited three Royal Chateaux Versailles. St. Germain en Laye and Fontainebleau. They are marvellous especially the latter where Napoleon lived, and signed his abdication.

So while we are waiting for our papers and uniforms etc to go to work. We are seeing Paris. We may be here only a few days more. It may be two weeks – We need patience and must wait as contentedly as we can for our chance to come.

There are several English Friends in the City. They have done wonderful work and have won a remarkable entree [sic] for us. If it were not for them we would not be here or at least would not be so nearly ready to go into the country for the regular work. We also are members of the American Red Cross and have the entrée which is their privilege. It means that our Unit is remarkably well fixed and will get to work much sooner than other organizations [sic] can do.

I haven't had any mail yet at all except a couple of letters that came over on the same boat with us. Last night after our Friends Meeting some one brought in a whole bundle of mail a hundred letters or more, but not one of them was for me. It was disappointing. I am patient because I know you have written and know you will keep on writing. My letters may be held up for censoring but none of the rest had been opened. I don't understand exactly.

I wrote a private note to Father + Mother giving them some news that makes me very happy. I said they might pass it on to thee but I am not ready to have it go any farther just yet. Perhaps thee is not surprised. I know thee will be pleased especially when thee learns to know M.

more. She says she feels conscious of not having made a very good impression on thee.

Well Auntie Its nearly the end of my paper. Please write often. Have a letter at N. York all the time Boats only come once in 10 days about. Love. Edwin.

§

Paris. Oct. 7. 1917.

Dear Ones at Home. –

When I came in this afternoon I found a good fat letter for me with Aunt Jennie's familiar hand writing on the envelope. I noticed it had been mailed Sept. 10. It seems to take a long time to come. A day or so ago one came from Clara which had been sent Sept. 4. I had received letters from Phila mailed Sept. 17 and 19 several days ago. The Canadian letters must go by England. None have been censored so far.

It is needless to say how glad I was to hear from you all and to get such a good letter. Aunt Tamer thee surely added a lot too. It is all news and such good familiar news such news from home that comes in to a fellow in a foreign country very very much appreciated.

I also got some other news today that we have been waiting for nearly a month. A lot of our "carnets" have come so we can leave now for the war zone where our work is going to be. We have had to wait so long to get permission to go up north but we are off tomorrow morning. There will be some of the Unit still left here but our own little group the one to which I belong at present leaves tomorrow morning for Grunzy a little town north East of Paris which was evacuated by the Germans this spring. We will be busy from now on repairing houses which have been partly destroyed and will probably spend most all winter there. I will

try to write as much as I can about the work when I get there. The censors will not allow us to put too many details in letters but I will try to make my letters mean something and hope you will be interested.

We have enjoyed our stay in Paris altho of course we have been anxious to get away to our real work. There have been many wonderful things that we have had the opportunity of seeing and if we do not get back to Paris for any length of time we will be glad of the few weeks we have had.

The past few days we have been doing some work at a Red Cross store house in Paris in organizing and repiling some food stuffs. We moved and piled about 75 tons of condensed milk in 70 lb boxes nearly as much corned beef and about 30 tons of sugar in 100 lb sacks. When we piled sugar sacks up thirty feet it meant some heavy work but there were a dozen of us and we were glad to get some work to do as we will probably get some of those stores to distribute to refugees later on in the winter.

Our uniforms are made now and we have been wearing them for a few days. They are grey and are cut something like a soldiers uniform with an eight pointed star on our left arm which is the Friends ~~isg~~ insignia.

§

Mont-Thabot Hotel
4. Rue du Mont-Thabor
PARIS
Téléph. GUT. 57-64

They are very comfortable and will be warm. Also they are good looking. We have A.R.C. on our shoulders and a Red Cross pin on our caps. I hope I can get some pictures to send to you this winter sometime of some of us if not of some of our work.

I hope you will pardon this hurried letter tonight but I want to get one off to you before I go up into the field "somewhere in France" It is nearly eleven o'clock and I know I am hurrying too much to write a good letter but maybe you will appreciate a short one.

I should have written you yesterday but I'll have to admit all my little writing time was taken up writing an important one. You can imagine what a pleasant task I have this winter in writing and reading a set of letters that will mean much to me. Maybe I'm giving away a secret by speaking thus that I asked to have kept close but it's too good not to be able to refer to it in my home letters. Let my family my whole family know how happy I am Mother please and then they can read this letter as common news, only please don't tell too many outsiders.

I do spend a lot of time writing to and thinking of the very fine person I left in Philadelphia and altho it's hard not to be able to be near there for so long. It is more wonderful than I can tell to know that in the old Quaker city there is a Quaker maid who is waiting for me and with whom I am going to be so happy in future years.

To have the inspiration of such a splendid young woman's love has made this expedition a remarkable one for me. You can imagine how I will have to work and you will realize what an incentive I will have. The home coming will be a wonderful one to me when the time comes for more reasons than one. Don't you forget it. I will ~~the~~ be the happiest fellow that ever entered New York Harbor when I come back to America.

Well, when I begin to get answers to some of my letters from France they will be interesting. Please answer the one I sent last week, several times. I wish every member of the household would express himself

because I will be disappointed if he doesn't. I'm too proud of myself to live. You will be too sometime.

Aunt Ettie. how are you? I know I am a stranger but now that you are going to be one of the Sunnyside household I want you to realize my letters are to you too. I often think of you and hope that the sorrows of the last few years may be softened by happiness in our home.

My love to you all, my deepest love. May you all keep well and happy as I am.

Edwin.

§

Sunday Evening 10/14/17.

Dear Folks at Home in a comfortable house, -

Last ~~Tuesday~~ Monday a dozen of our men were working at a Red Cross ware house in Paris moving boxes of milk and bags of sugar by the ton, when a message came that our Carnets had arrived and that we were to leave for our places in the field the next morning.

Tuesday we spent most of the day coming up here. It was a mighty interesting day for us as we came up into the war region. Some of the way we came by train and the balance by big truck, arriving at this destroyed village about dark. The experience we had and the things we have seen since Tuesday are so many and so new, that I hardly know how to make my letter most interesting to you. It is not the easiest thing to make a letter that will convey at all the conditions that we find here.

This little town where normally about 100 or 150 people lived was taken by the Germans in Sept. 1914 just after the war broke out. The people here were farmers. The land about here ~~is~~ was all good flat farming country but the farmers instead of



A house damaged in the Battle of the Somme.

each living on his own farm all lived in the village along one street with their houses and barns all built in a court shaped arrangement all brick common red brick and all walled in. garden and everything. Now more than half of the bricks are blown to pieces and you can imagine how desolate it makes a place look. No you can't get an idea either because no one can until he sees it. The destruction is so complete that there is not a can nor a bucket left but what has a hole shot in it. The only reason there is anything left is that the fuses on the charges of dynamite on one part of the street didn't work when the Germans left and the blowing up of the village wasn't as complete as they had planned. All the houses barns and walls that are left standing have holes about a foot square chiseled out every 15 feet into which dynamite was put. Then they were all connected up by a wire cable which was meant to set them off by electricity but for some reason they didn't

all go off and the holes are here but most of the walls are standing. Of course a good many of these have been hit by shell fire and have been spoiled that way but they are not demolished. The roofs of every building have been spoiled by shell fire and three years of weather has played havoc with them. The Germans lived here in this town for two years and a half and only withdrew this February. About half of the inhabitants stayed all the time, only leaving for a few weeks preceding the German evacuation during which time the wanton destruction took place.

The house where we are living belonged to the Patron of the village, the head man of the town, and during the last three years has been German officers quarters. It must have been a beautiful place. It is a low long cottage with a big garden.

§

Mont-Thabot Hotel
4. Rue du Mont-Thabor
PARIS
Téléph. GUT. 57-64

Monday night. 10/15/17.

We are going to have good long winter evenings to write or read. Supper is at six and we don't usually go to bed before nine so we have an hour or two. Most of the fellows read and write. Diaries take up a lot of time. I am keeping a few notes here but my real diary is being mailed about every other day to Philadelphia. I hope they all get through. These letters will serve as a diary for us in years to come.

Today another fellow and myself were repairing a roof on a house in the village. The chimney had been blown off by a shell and had broken a lot of slates. A few other shell holes in the roof too – They weren't hard to mend but they had let in a lot of rain. There are lots of old slates about from roofs that have no building left.

The family that lives in the house is a forlorn sight. They have been here all the time during the German occupation. The mother is a woman about 35 years old and she has four little boys the oldest twelve. The barn is nearly all destroyed and the house has one corner room which is no longer good for anything. Things are in a forlorn shape, not at all like most French places. Usually a French family will keep the yard and house neat no matter what else happens but this family is too far gone for that.

We are doing other repair jobs in the village. Saturday we finished the school. It had been badly blown up but two rooms could be saved so we walled up one side and fixed the roof and now they will soon move into it. School was begun last week for the first time in 3 years. There were 20

pupils, now all crowded in one little room about the size of 15 feet square.

It seems strange that the villagers left here do not seem to have much interest left in life. There are no men around except real old ones and the women are far from lighthearted. Reason enough I guess too. It is horrible what has been done to this town and hundreds of others in France. Perhaps when we put a roof on a house to keep the rain out or patch a shell hole in a wall to shelter a family for the winter, the people will revive some interest in things. Surely there is need of help here and even though what we can do is only a drop in a bucket, we ought to be glad for a chance to help.

We have use now for both our French and some German if we knew any. There are some German prisoners working for us but nobody can talk much German. All the French I've learned has spoiled any little German I learned in school. French is coming. Of course here the peasants do not speak as good French as the Paris people but we are learning some every day. The woman where I worked today lisped badly and talked very indistinctly so we had a hard time understanding each other.

It has rained some every day since we came here. Today was fine but little showers came up every once in a while. It was quite warm today but as a rule it has seemed pretty cold so far. We have to cuddle down pretty close into our blankets at night to keep warm and a cold bath in a room without doors or windows is chilly. We haven't warm water yet. Our plumbing is slow getting done.

Letters are pretty scarce here. Please send a bunch as often as you can. I watch the postman when he comes each day with a lot of interest but so far no results. Your one letter and two others have been about the extent of my mail for a month. That isn't enough for a fellow in my state of

mind, but it can't be helped. Ellwood says when he left Phila a week after I did. Marion told him he wasn't going to write for censors. Censors haven't opened my mail yet and anyway they wouldn't stop them. Naturally I wrote back that Argument but it takes over a month for a reply from here. Well it will all come out in the wash. Love to all Edwin.

§

Mont-Thabot Hotel
4. Rue du Mont-Thabor
PARIS
Téléph. GUT. 57-64

Sunday Afternoon. 10/21/17.
Dear Home Folks

Another week has gone by and not a letter has reached me from any source. It does seem queer and also a bit disappointing, but probably the mail is held up somewhere. Some day it will come all in a bunch.

The Germans built a little summer house in the front yard when they were here and I'm sitting in it now writing. It is built of solid sticks about eight inches in diameter and is hidden from aeroplane view by being stuck under a big spreading lilac bush. I can look out over the delapidated flower gardens, over the two German graves marked by a wooden cross and see the ruins of the barn and walls on every side. It is a sickening sight to see so many piles of broken bricks and rafters sticking barely up in the air, but such is this little town. It is almost hopeless to think of repairing a town and even more hopeless to think of the thousands of towns worse off than this one with not a brick standing three feet high. We are only given heart when we realize that the roof we patched last week will keep the rains off the bed of

a family for the first time since the bombardment in 1914 and to think that we can do a similar thing next week. It isn't much when looked at from the standpoint of the whole of the wreckage but it is worthwhile to be working and accomplishing some thing.

I was very domestic all the morning. After breakfast I swept the dining room a couple of times, once wasn't enough and cleared out some accumulated trash. Then I went out into some of the old gardens back of the house and gathered enough flowers to make four or five large bouquets. I found some nasturtiums some big yellow flowers enough of some sort of bunch chrysanthemums to fill up two big shells which we use for vases and a lovely bunch of roses. It is so strange that there are roses here now because it's really October weather. But they are beautiful buds and ought to come out well outside when it's warmer. Our bachelor room looks quite bright with so many flowers.

It was ripping cold last night. There was a heavy frost and my washrag was stiff when I took it down to take my bath. I have a cold bath every morning. It makes me feel pretty good too. When I get up I put on slippers and a sweater and go thru a setting up drill for about 5 or 10 minutes then a cold sponge all over puts me in great shape for breakfast. I shan't do it if it gets too cold but so far it feels great. We sleep in an open room and get all the air there is and it must be good air for I had a cold when I came from Paris but was cured the first week up here.

§

I have started to keep a diary, which ought to be interesting some time later. There are lots of happenings here that wouldn't be suitable to tell about in a letter

because of censorship so I am recording all those things now and will bring them back with me. Writing helps to keep me in form in English such as I have. We would get pretty rusty and stiff if we didn't do something like that during the winter.

Did I tell you about the fellows we are with here. There are 18 of us in this repair Unit and six more down the street who are farmers. Five of our Unit are Englishmen and the others are from our Haverford group. There is quite a difference between the Americans and the English but we are getting acquainted and will be intimate before long. Mr. Angus the head of our Unit is a fine sort of young Englishman. He is quiet but knows how to go about the jobs here. He talks French pretty well and that is mighty important.

Just now while I was writing here a French woman came in and wanted to know if we could fix the roof on her barn. I took her in to see Angus and when she came out I asked her to sit down and chat awhile. She wasn't spending Sunday as I hope you are. She said she had lots of work to do and little time but she did sit down for a while. Her family are all away except her old father and a little girl. They are the farmers. No wonder she has to work. The poor woman looked like it too. Her husband and 15 yr old boy are in Germany carried away by the Boche. She said she was here all the time during the German occupation and told me officers had often sat here in this bench where I am now and no doubt planned out such destruction as we see all about us. It was an interesting little call and I enjoyed it. It isn't very hard to talk some sort of French. Just after dinner a woman came in and happened to meet me at the gate. She wanted to know if I spoke French. She had been down to the other house (the farmers) and could make them understand ~~about~~ that the horses that



A German graveyard in Grunzy

they had put out to pasture were getting into her beets. I went down and interpreted a bit and they got the horse up.

It is very quiet and restful here now except for the whirr of aeroplanes which we hear constantly and which we have gotten used to now. There is a constant roar on some days like today in the distant. It is very indistinct but we know what it is and shudder when we realize what it really means. We are about 15 or 20 miles away.

My love to you all. Write. write. write.

Edwin.

§

10/21/17 (*added*)

F.W.V.R.C. A.P.O., S.5. B.E.F. France
Nov. 20. 1917.

Dear Folks at Home. –

Wouldn't it be fine if I could spend an evening in America tonight. I would enjoy it I guess, but why waste time worrying and imagining. The time will come before long and I surely will be ready for it.

Mother's and Aunt Tamer's letters of 10/24 came last week. It is good to hear that you are all well at home and that things are going as usual. There must be quite a majority of "wimen" in the household as Aunt Tamer says. She thinks father has his hands full. I hope he does.

I haven't heard from Aunt Jennie since she arrived in California. It takes about three weeks for a letter to come from the other side and I suppose she wouldn't get there until the first week in November. I surely hope her winter will be what she anticipates.

I don't know whether I have had four letters from home or only three since I came to France. Mother says they had sent four. Probably so. I think the mail service is pretty good. None of my letters have been censored coming in and I haven't heard that any were opened on the way to America. There is a good circuit between here and Phila I know for which I thank the postal authorities. From what mother wrote in her last letter I couldn't make out whether she had received a certain confidential letter of mine or not. It must have been time but she didn't comment on it at all and I surely think it was a big enough bit of news to cause some few words of reprimand or otherwise. Just wait till I get back to that country. I'll show you that you are going to have another member in your family who will do credit to it. Among yourselves this

need be no secret. I mean the members of our household, but please don't spread the word any farther just yet.

Well, we are working away as usual out here in this little French country village. I am putting on a new slate roof which for the two of us is several weeks job. It has been good weather for more than a week now no rain and not very cold. The days are very short however. We have to stop work by 4.30 now or 4.00 if we are doing interior work. I wish it didn't get dark quite so soon. We could get more accomplished.

A week or so ago we got the rest of our personal equipment. An overcoat which we are to wear with our uniforms and a cordoroy work suit came also a pair of heavy shoes for each fellow. We have mattresses now and warm woollen sleeping bags, so we can keep warm now in pretty cold weather. I am surprised that it has not been colder. We had a few days of cold a few weeks ago but lately it has been mild. For the middle of November it is more moderate than we expected to find. There has been no sign of snow yet. Maybe we will get all the cold we are looking for, but with lots of wood and a little coal and several stoves we ought to be able to keep warm. It's the rain and damp and mud that Northern France is noted for and I guess it is possible to have it disagreeable but our work doesn't take us into so very much bad mud.

I have a chance to do a little doctoring here in town. A little boy is sick with ulcerated stomatitis. It is an infection resulting from a rundown condition. He is a pitiful little fellow. I noticed him before he was taken sick and thought he could hardly escape some trouble soon. He is thin and poorly clad + nourished. The mother lives in a filthy home with four boys and it's a wonder more aren't sick. A Dr. from a nearby town, a Red Cross American Doctor

came over to see him yesterday and wanted to take him to the hospital but the mother wouldn't listen to it. Dr. said the child had little chance of getting well here but the mother wouldn't consent to have him taken away. I go in three times a day and wash out his mouth and try to do something for him but it isn't very encouraging. The mother is sort of half witted and the child never was

about the little boy.

Tonight when I went in to treat the boy about a half dozen other youngsters filed in from the yard to see the job but we had them sit down outside the room. They, the children, are all on good terms with me, and all of them know me. They call me Monsieur Victor. I don't know how they got the name but all of them know it. I



Children with Christmas presents from the team, Grunzy, France, 1917.

bright. He was very badly frightened poor kid when the Germans were here and never got over it. The mother talks the most ununderstandable French I ever heard. She has a few teeth out and just gurgles her words. She is tongue tied too. With that combination it's hard to find out much

heard a couple of them talking today about me and one said to the other. He is a teacher, a doctor, a roofer and an acrobat! There is a little bit of hero worship going on so I must try to live up to the challenge. Did I tell you how I taught the school. or rather had the school for a half an hour one

day. That was great fun. They always ask me for chocolate when they see me.

It has been quite a while now since we have taken any side excursions to battle fields etc. The things about here that were at first so exciting have become so common. We even don't look up when there are explosions that make the shingles rattle on the roof where we are working. They are setting off a lot of unexploded shells every day which certainly make a lot of noise. When we compare that to the roar + constant rumble we hear from 15 miles away, we can imagine what it must be at the front.

Our evenings are long here. I usually get myself comfortably fixed around my little stove and write or read. I'm afraid my letters most all go one way. It spoils my other correspondence too I know. I am frank to admit my home letters aren't quite as full nor as frequent as they used to be. But don't think that I am not as much interested in home affairs as I ever was. Just because I have found a new and a wonderful person to fill up my life doesn't mean I abandon all the former ties. Oh! I wish you knew Marion. None of you have any idea how fine she is. Aunt Jennie doesn't know her at all. It's going to be one of my great joys to bring her home some day. Just wait!

Over here it's hard to imagine what it will be like again when we go back to a normal civil life. War will have had its influence felt at home no doubt and it may be several years before we can expect to see a normal life. But first we want to see the close of the war which can't come any too soon.

We get an "Intelligencer" once in a while here. It is good to see it. Some New York papers come about three weeks late but they are news to us.

Thanksgiving comes next week, the 29th.

The fellows want to have sort of a big day among ourselves. We are going to have a party and entertain our English Friends. I for one would be able to celebrate Thanksgiving on a very small and simple meal but some others want a blow out. It hardly seems the time nor place.

Don't forget that letters are a great delicacy to us away over here. Everybody write. Aunt Tamer thee doesn't know how I enjoyed thy letter. It was so newsy.

Love to you all. It may be time for Merry Xmas.

Edwin.