

to be processed thru medical channels lest the regular channels treat him as badly as the German propaganda suggests. I had planned sending him back to the POW enclosure but when I had to send in the officer I decided that I might as well send in the Jerry also because it would be more convenient for me and I wouldn't have to look for the POW enclosure to return him. I was busy the rest of the day keeping in contact with regimental headquarters which was located just a few hundred yards from me. It was extremely interesting to hang around there and listen to the various reports as they came in because the situation was very fluid and things were moving fast, as you can readily figure out from the news which you have read in the paper. I also took a trip down to another unit to determine how they wanted me to work with them, for I was over in this area in order to help out if necessary, in case this unit ran into any opposition, which it didn't. I spent most of the day just waiting. Most of the men caught up in the sleep which they had missed the night before, but I'm afraid that I am not the sleeping type, for I stayed up all day long, taking care of the myriad of things that are necessary in my job. The situation clarified some and I was all set to go back, not where I had come from, but to another considerably farther north because of the advances which our boys who were doing the fighting were making. However, after getting all loaded and ready to move I had to sit around for a couple of hours because I couldn't get clearance to go over a certain road which was busy and which I had to traverse for about a mile in order to get on the road which would take me to my destination. While I was impatiently waiting to leave, I was approached by an Italian civilian who asked me to see a man who had been wounded by shell fragments a couple of days before. The folks told me that he lived in a house just down the way so I started out with them, but when I was able to see the house, which was quite a trip down one hill, across a creek, and up another hill, I told them that I couldn't accompany them because I was momentarily expecting to move and that I had to remain in the area. So they ~~decided~~ decided to bring him over to see me in a cart pulled by a donkey. That was OK by me for if I ~~was~~ not there when they returned they could be seen by Maj. Thompson who was located closer to them than I was. While I was there I had supper with the regimental headquarters group, which was a break for I would have had to eat cold rations in my area. After returning to my area I soon saw the cart coming with my patient, so I stopped at the road to see him. He was an old man of 84 who had been hale and hearty up until the time he had been hurt, having taken care of a farm with his brother who was two years his senior. He had a penetrating wound of his chest which apparently, despite the innocuity of its appearance had nicked the esophagus for he was having great difficulty in swallowing, so I decided to send him in. You know, it is quite a problem getting patients just when you are ready to move because you need every bit of your transportation, and if you send out an ambulance you are just that much short, so in order to overcome this difficulty I make it a policy to load up the ambulance to its capacity with patient and with my men, and have the men wait at the clearing station until I can pick them up, or if they know where I am going then they go to that area after delivering the patient at the clearing station. That is what I did in this case. The most interesting part of the patient, was the interpreter he had with him. I find that I can understand just about everything the Italians say if they only will talk slowly, but I do have trouble making myself completely understood. However this interpreter talked English with an English accent, and it turned out that he was from the French portion of Switzerland and that he worked for 11 years for the League of Nations. He claimed to know Hull, Chamberlain, and Churchill quite well. He speaks French, Italian, and English. He seems to have been in Rome at the outbreak of the war and remained there until the railway stations there were bombed by our planes. His wife, a Swiss, became too nervous to stick it out so they moved north to another city (thru which I had passed on my way up to the wheat field about which I have been writing, and it really had been terribly messed up by our tanks and planes, hardly a house in the town being undamaged). When this town came under fire they moved to a third town and finally to a house in this area well out in the country where the danger of our planes was less than in town. Here they decided to stay and let the Germans do the moving rather than they, and so they had finally gotten behind the front just that day, for as I mentioned earlier in the letter, the Germans had still been in those hills that morning when we had pulled in. I had noticed the remarkable accuracy of our planes in their bombing attacks, for now, unlike much that we had seen earlier in the war, there were no bomb craters all around, merely destroyed houses, most of which still had the acrid odor from unsettled plaster, and many of which were still burning when we passed. This accuracy is simply amazing. Since we were so near the front lines we saw quite a few heart-rending sights of people who were just returning to their homes after having been chased away by the fighting, only to find their houses a rubble of plaster, and were able to watch them rummage thru the plaster on the ground to try to salvage

Monday 23 April 1900

any little things which may not have been completely destroyed. Even so these people seem happy to see us and waved and smiled at us ~~at us~~ as we passed.

I did see an amusing thing occur while I waited in the wheat field. A group of Italian civilians came down the hill pulling a dead Jerry after them to a hole which they had dug in which to bury him. I was surprised to see that they were going to bury him with all his clothes on, even to a good pair of shoes that he was wearing. This is most uncommon because we frequently see dead Jerries lying on the ground with their shoes already removed by some passing civilian. Well, these folks tossed the Jerry into the pit and proceeded to cover him up with dirt. An hour or so later they returned with some other civilians and disinterred the Jerry, removed his shoes, and reburied him. You could tell that these people were relative novices at this messy business of war, for veteran civilians would have removed those shoes at once, and never given it a second thought.

I had intended writing you a letter while I was waiting in the wheat field but between the trips which I made to regimental headquarters and the terrible dust which simply beclouded the area it was impossible. Despite the fact that we were located 25 yards from the road the traffic over this was terrific and even jeeps raised heavy clouds of white dust so you can imagine what it was like when tanks passed, which they did in goodly number.

Finally I got permission to take off and believe me I was plenty happy to leave because it meant that I would arrive at my new destination in daylight and would have a chance to get the tentage up before dark set in. The trip was a beautiful one, thru hills, instead of mountains, and over roads much better than the ones to which we had become accustomed during our year of combat. I can't tell you the thrill which we in the jeep felt when we arrived at the last hill from which we could look down on the valley stretching before us as far as we could see. We sat there and gazed to our heart's content at this marvellous phenomenon of flatness. No more mountains to be fought over before the alps! No more twisting and turning over roads at 5 miles per hour! We would now be able to get patients back in a few minutes where formerly it would have taken hours over the same distance. No more sleeping on the slant. And houses galore! We should now almost invariably have a house to set up in. However, as if to belie this statement our very first bivouac turned out to be a wheat field. However, it was just a bivouac and we weren't planning to stay there long. We hadn't brought all of our tentage with us because we had planned on making a second trip back to the old wheat field to pick up the barracks bags and I had also promised to let the regiment use the remaining space in our truck. As a result we had only one storage tent in which to put the officers, the OP, the station, and supply. Surprisingly it wasn't too crowded and we slept quite comfortably.

I know that you read in the paper that my division along with one other division were the ones that cut off highway 9. Well, I want to let you know that we, i.e. the combat team were not in on that honor. We were busy elsewhere, prepared to do some fighting but finding it unnecessary.

Yesterday afternoon we moved to this present area and are now living in a house and a barn. We officers have quite a nice upstairs room and the station is downstairs below us while the kitchen is around to the side of the building. Only yesterday morning were the Jerries in this area. There are numerous partisans in the community and they were out patrolling the roads for snipers or any German soldiers that they could find. They had already taken prisoners numbering in the hundreds and were quite proud of themselves, for which I don't blame them. This vicinity apparently had a number of Jerry supply dumps of various types and they had to pull out of here before they could do any real damage to much of this. As a result there is equipment of all sorts all over the vicinity. The GIs down the road moved into a place that had German horses all over it, and we had soldiers riding up and down the roads on horseback all day long. My men picked up a couple of German 2 1/2 ton trucks one of which runs on diesel oil and the other a gasoline type. We planned keeping the gas vehicle, figuring that we would get a couple of moves out of it before we received refusal from division for our application to retain it. I spoke to Frank Dugan this morning and he said that he believed that we might be able to keep it for the entire push, which will be swell if we can. I have the men working on it at the present time to see if they can fix it up so that it won't give us any trouble. We also got a couple of small trailers which will go well with our jeeps. I believe that we'll get to keep those too. They will help us out considerably.

I believe that I've mentioned the friendliness of the people around here. They were really happy to see us come into this area. I talked to the son of the owner of this house and asked him a bit about the situation before we had arrived. These people round here didn't suffer too much with German occupation because they were strongly partisan, so much so that the Germans feared reprisals for inconsiderate actions. The paratroops who were here for a while were quite arrogant and demanding, insisting on being served in every way, but the other troops weren't too mean to them. The people were forced to dig defensive positions for the Germans and to loan their oxen and horses for pulling loads. Otherwise they were left pretty much alone. They certainly have been well fed, looking as good as any Americans from the nutritional standpoint.

The house in which we are now ensconced formerly housed Jerries as well as the 6 families which live in it and the house next to it. There are a total of 26 civilians living in these two houses. Yet they were good enough to move their furniture out of three of the rooms and clean these rooms up so that we could use them. The boss of the place is a very obese old woman who seems quite happy to see us and offers wine with a lavish hand. Not bad wine, either. Yesterday we had span for supper, and naturally had plenty left over, for the boys don't care to eat very much of it. We offered this to the people of the house and at first they refused until we explained to them that we would have to throw it into the garbage pit if they didn't take it, so they finally accepted. We have noticed this reticence toward charity in the last two places in which we have been and can account for it only by the fact that these people are not as hungry as were the people farther south, or rather south of the front line from which the push started. One might infer from this that the Germans are better organizers in the distribution of food, but I don't believe that that is the proper explanation. Rather I would infer that the Germans had taken so much foodstuff and the means of growing more food and had destroyed so much material before they pulled out of an area that the people left behind were no longer independent as they were ~~left~~ north of the front lines. They were unable to do this in this area because of the strong partisan group who captured the Germans before many of them could get away, much less do any destruction.

Well, sweets, that brings me pretty much up to date and tells you very nearly what has been going on in my gradually increasingly interesting life. I'll try to keep up to date in my letters but in a way I hope that I won't be able to because that will mean that we are moving too fast for me to take time out to write.

All my love, darling, don't worry about me because I'm pretty safe under the present set up, and should continue to be so.

Walt.

Chap ✓
 Louise ✓
 Leo ✓
 Edith
 Ginny
 Irv
 Soph