

1324 L St., N. W.,
Washington, D. C.,
May 22, 1917.

Dear Mother & Dad:

It is almost midnight and I have just received your dear message and have just finished sending you a night letter which will explain more in detail than my first one.

I feel much better now since I have heard from you and finally made the decision, altho it has certainly been one trying day of my life. Some time ago I felt that this sort of a position was what I was best fitted for and I have certainly let nothing go unturned in getting it, and now as it is open I think the only wise thing to do is to accept it.

While I haven't said much about it, I have given each and every one of your suggestions just as much thought as any of the many I have been working on. It wouldn't look right for me to try to get out by pretending to farm- they are going to see to it that no one is going to be exempt unless they have a mighty mighty good reason. It's is too late to get in as an officer now and as sure as I live I believe I would be included in the draft and that would be the very worst thing under the sun that can happen to anyone.

The more I have thought over it and talked with such men as the Y.M.C.A. secretaries, deacons in our church, and everybody in general, the more I am convinced that I am doing the right thing. When they begin to draft them in a few weeks now it is going to be take most trying time this country aver saw and when that does happen I think we will look back on my decision today as a very wise and good one. By taking this now I need never have any fear of ever having to serve in the trenches and still I will not be squirming out of my duty and I can ever look everyone in the eye and say that I did my duty.

The offer did not come definitely until today at two o'clock as that was the earliest I could get to the War Department after work, altho I have known for several days that it was hanging fire. You should have seen the men who were applying for it- others are looking for such places you flee. Lavery, the Joplin boy you will remember whom you met while at the boarding house- he roomed where you did you will remember. He has been looking out for it for us. He cannot go this time as he cannot get relieved but will go in a week or so. When It finally came my turn to go in, I went in and told him briefly just what my qualifications were, looking him square in the eye. When I had finished he said, "Young man I think you have the stuff in you and I

will give you the first place"- there are some five to be filled which are about the same sort of work but I will get first ranking among the group. Then he said, "you will have to decide right now as others are wanting the place, I would rather have you but you must say before four o'clock what you will do." Then I got busy and for nearly an hour I tried to get you over the long distance and finally could not and then I went back and told him just how I felt about taking it without letting my parents know and have a chance to express their opinion. I thought sure he was going to drop considering me right there but then something else worked in my favor- in fact two things. First, he saw my Shriner's pin. (Now I was keeping it as a sort of surprise when I came home that I am now a Shriner, having gone up in masonry during the winter and that was the pin I suggested you might buy later on for a Christmas present). When he saw it he said, "Well, I would take you on account of that pin if nothing else." And then, just as luck would have it, Mr. Grinnell, one of the deacons in the church who works in that Department came along, and he gave me a great boost, so all together that caused him to grant me time enough to get a telegram to you which I did.

Then we went carefully over the work altho he had told me before pretty much what it would be. I will mean work of course, but entirely out of the danger zone and located at a quiet and safe place far behind the firing zone. I will be right hand man to the highest U.S. Army Medical man in Europe. My exact work of course will be stenographic and head of the clerical force which keeps the records as to sanitary conditions, reporting to relatives those wounded and killed, and anything else that would have to do with the welfare of the men in the trenches.

He told me that by going now and getting in on the ground floor and getting the first place on the staff, later when it was enlarged I should get promoted in no time just so far as I was able to make good. I start in with sixteen hundred dollars a year with all expenses paid over. You see I will not be under army discipline and will likely not wear an uniform and am not signed up for any definite length of time and therefore can resign whenever I wish. Everyone I have talked with has told me that I could never afford to turn it down and I have talked with people who have an interest in me, and who have advised me as I think you would have had you been here. I know it looks like deciding a thing pretty quick but it's getting time to make decisions in a time like this when I believe there is so much at stake. I firmly believe, when the draft came I would have been included, for there is a blank in which you had to state just what military experience you had had and whether there was anyone depending upon you.

We will sail, according to present plans, about Thursday morning on a swift boat which will not go thru the danger zone but which will land likely somewhere in southern France and you can bet with the highest officials in the Army and Navy on board they will see to it that we get safely there and without danger.

You will never know how much I appreciated the telegram which you sent tonight. I know how much it must have cost you in heart throbs and tears and God forgive me for what anxiety and worry it has caused you but Heaven knows I have tried to do my duty and I hope you will think it is for the best. Had you said in your telegram not to go I would not have decided to go but in the days to come I feel that we will all find it was the best thing to do.

I will send one box of my thing home by freight. In case you have occasion to look after anything which I might leave undone, you can write to G. L. Hall, 402 Atlantic Apartments, 11th and O Sts., N.W., Washington. We have been studying together for over a year and he will be glad to do anything he can for us.

It is late and I must close, but I will write more tomorrow and every day until I leave and just as often as I can thereafter. Tomorrow I will write about other matters, such as mail, etc., after I get the information myself. It is quite late so I must close.

Your loving son,