

LIEUT. JNO. EELK WRITES INTERESTING LETTER TO REV AND MRS G. W. BELK.

France, Oct 16, '18.

Dearest Mother:—

For two weeks I've really been in too big a rush to write anybody, but I have slipped in one or two letters since I came here. I am quite satisfied at my present location, even tho' the line has pushed on until we are actually out of range of Boche artillery. However, we are not inactive.

To my utter surprise and delight, Capt Ladd and his battery rolled in yesterday to be stationed on the same line with my battery! We mess together. It was so good to see Sgt. Pender, Bill Ladson and all the old Hendersonville bunch, and the two batteries have had a regular reunion. Of course they have marvelous tales to tell each other, as we served in different sections during the big push. Sgt. Pender has a German machine gun and several thousand rounds of ammunition that he gathered up. We are now using it against its old masters. And my men have souvenirs of all descriptions.

My battery withstood the fiercest fire while Capt Ladd's was more in the rush. Tomorrow I have a 200 mile trip to make on my cycle, and I'll pass thru a famous little city,—occupied by Germans since 1914, until Pershing's men drove them out recently. The Boche left it a hole of filth and corruption.

The fighting in front of us is fierce and without cessation. The ground here quivers night and day and the roar is like thunder.

The peace proposal is a total fake. It was a peace offensive, brought on by a war defensive! Our troops are glorious, fearless, tireless, invincible. We are filled with enthusiasm, both by our successes and by the spirit of the folks back home. And we are carrying on, on, on. We are rolling in our mouths, like a sweet morsel, the taste of victory. The star of Germany is waning. And for the first time since we entered the war, I am ready to say, "Victory is ours." I always knew we would make the war turn in our favor, but never before have I foreseen the real victory, the triumph. The end is not yet, but the result is clear.

Lieut. Tower has been transferred and I have 2nd Lieut. Voos, from Connecticut,—a graduate of Yale, rather clever chap, fresh from training camp, and believe me I'm giving him his third degree! We are going

to get on fine together.

I heard today that Bill Oates was a prisoner and not killed—am so glad. Today I have had seven Boche prisoners working for me, piling material. Young fellows, and bright. Seem satisfied, too!!

Haven't heard a word from George—except indirectly. My new lieutenant saw him ten days ago. He is still near Paris, but has probably started this way by now. I am certainly expecting him to turn up almost any time now. He is to be 20 miles north of my position.

Don't suppose I'm getting all my mail, but am satisfied. Address my letters plainly in full: "8th Anti-Aircraft Battery, A. P. O. No. 702, American Ex. Forces. Have mislaid my Christmas coupon. Will try and find it shortly. Hope it reaches you by November 20. Only 3-lbs. and from only one person. By all means enclose 6 packages of Durham Duplex blades. I have plenty of razors but am running short on blades. Maybe you better put 12 packages in my Xmas box. Don't go to any trouble, however.

I am living in a little corrugated iron hut. Have a baby stove that heats and smokes up the room quickly. It's cold and rainy now. The weather has been fierce for two weeks. Am suffering at present with a bad tonsil, and my men are having another dose of Spanish "flu." We've had the round—cooties, fleas, itch, etc., etc., all of which is taken as a matter of course.

I got my men equipped with rubber boots last week, and they're tickled to death. Also got them leather coats. Our ration is splendid. We get frozen beef every other day, potatoes, soup, beans, canned beef, corned beef hash, jam and candles. I am living in splendid style. Get 2 liters of sweet milk every day and eggs occasionally for there are a number of farmers still living nearby. An old lady uses our waste from the kitchen for her pigs. She asked me for it first and I have kept my promise to her, while old women for miles have begged for it. Out of gratitude she brings me carrots, grapes and small quantities of other vegetables. I told my cooks to be extra kind to her. She is alone and very old, so they give her bread every day and always save her soup bones, etc.. Our battery has a splendid reputation among the French inhabitants. Out of our abundance we always have plenty for the hungry.

There is a boy, just about Sam's size, who comes to us often. The

poor little fellow has to use a crutch because his left leg was blown off above the knee by a German bomb. He's a bright, intelligent boy. But I'm so thankful it isn't Sam or Frank. How these people can stay and stay in shell torn towns or country, I can't see. Amid bursting shells and bombs, gas and all the horrors of war, they cling to home.

Once I was in a village which was being swept by high explosives. Everybody was in dugouts, except a French Sergeant and me. I was looking for some of my men and we were expecting to be blown to pieces any moment. In front of a tiny hotel was a little boy about four years old, unconcerned, and apparently enjoying it. Fifty yards from his door was the most mangled and horrible sight I ever witnessed. A screaming woman rushed out and pulled him into the cellar. Later I found out that he, as had dozens of other kids in the village, had been born amid the roar of guns; had lived his first four years there, while the town was captured and re-captured. He knew no other condition. Shells and death were commonplace and meant little in his young life. The pitiful picture will always remain fresh in my memory. The thought of precious little Margaret flashed in my mind, as in comparison. And I thanked God that her little life had not been stunted and blighted by proximity to such things, and that she was safe in the land of sunshine and gladness—and flowers and birds.

I went 20 miles yesterday to the Base Hospital to see two of my men and I passed thru the garden spot of France. I wish I could describe the lovely hills and valleys, the castles, the chateaux, the quaint little villages, etc. Will have to do that later.

Best wishes and heart full of love for all my dear family. I send you each a kiss and you and Margaret two.
Your devoted son,
JOHN B. BELK.

EXPRESS CONTROL CHANGES

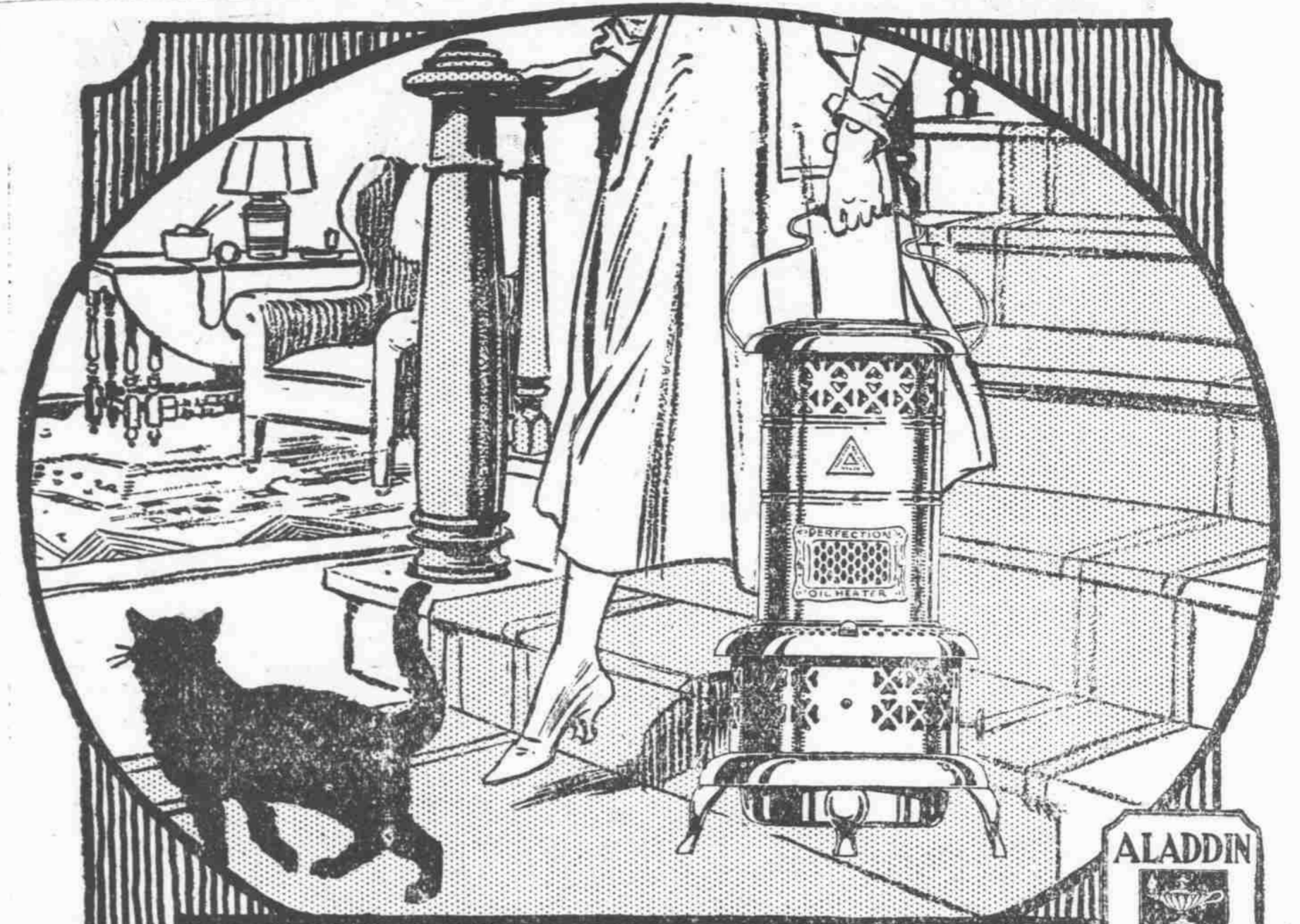
Washington, Nov. 16.—President Wilson today extended the tentacles of government control by taking over the nation's express companies. In a proclamation, effective at noon Monday, the president declared that "in order to administer to the best advantage the transportation business and operation of the American Railway Express system, which the president merged, it is desirable to make it specifically clear that the president has the possession, use, control and operation of the entire transportation system" of the company. Administration of the companies is placed in the hands of Director General McAdoo.

The action is regarded as significant here as indicating the government's intention to unify all the railroad business in such manner as to make its unscrambling later inadvisable. It also forecasts higher wages and increased express rates. McAdoo recently recommended to the interstate commerce committee that express rates be raised. He said it would be necessary to raise an additional \$24,000,000 in revenue. This, McAdoo explained, would be absorbed in increased cost of operation and increased wages, which the employees

of the merged companies were seeking. The interstate commerce commission has been investigating McAdoo's recommendation, but a decision appears not due for several weeks. Meanwhile, reports to the railroad administration show, the express employees were growing dissatisfied with their pay. The express company's revenues have hardly met expenses in the last two months, the earnings' statements reveal.

15,000 AUSTRIANS CAPTURED

Italian Headquarters on the Piave, Monday, Oct. 2.—Fifteen thousand prisoners had been taken by the British, Italians and French up to late today in the advance across the Piave which for the third time in one year is the scene of a desperate battle. This time, however, the tables are turned against the Austrians who are steadily being pressed back from the eastern bank of the river.



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CHRISTMAS GIFTS

THEY MUST BE SENT TO SOLDIERS OVERSEAS BEFORE DECEMBER 1st

The rules for sending Christmas packages to soldiers overseas has been changed so as to permit the sending of gifts from anyone without the coupon previously required.

The Time Limit for Sending Gifts has been Extended to December 1st

The War Industries Board advises early Christmas buying for even civilians in order to avoid overwork due to shortage of help, prevention of fuel consumption for light and heat.

APPROPRIATE GIFTS FOR SOLDIERS

Come in at once and select from the list of suitable articles listed below those which you desire to present to your soldier friends, who will more than ever appreciate your loving remembrance

WATERMAN'S IDEAL FOUNTAIN PENS.	BILL FOLDS.	BELTS WITH SILVER BUCKLES.	ARMY AND NAVY IDENTIFICATION TAGS.
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