

(I guess you have Miss Lyford + send it in if you
think so? Thank.)

Bordeaux, France
Sept. 15, 1939
Friday

Dearest Math' + all -

Seems everytime I get ready
to write my pen goes dry - this
will probably be hard to read
with this indelible...

Why hasn't any mail been forwarded
to me here from Rome + Marseilles?^{???}
it couldn't be because there is no
mail there, could it? Was expecting
heaps of it + there isn't even a card!

So just for that I won't write at all
about Switzerland (you can read it in
my log later) except to say that
we visited one day at a gorgeous Swiss
chalet - you'll see pictures of it + of
the ducky bathhouse - am mailing
the snaps today under separate
cover - mostly "human interest" ones.

X

Well, it was in Geneva that we
discovered just how serious the European
political situation was becoming, +
the Consul said his best advice was
for us to remain in Switzerland, but
it is too expensive to linger there for
long, + then couldn't get a boat till
they ran evacuation trains out +

they are horrible things, so decided it better to come to France - Consul there said we had better make a dash for it immediately as the borders might close ~~any~~ at any time, so we hopped on our bikes & crossed the border where wagons were pulled across the road & big piles of barbed wire were waiting to be strung across. We were lucky to get over, ^{as} a couple fellows got on barricaded roads next day & had to keep changing directions, & one cycled hard all day & by evening was only eight miles from Geneva still!

There were two separate French borders to cross - the Customs officers would not tell us why. Consul had told us we were lucky to have our cycles as trains not dependable now & very crowded & uncomfortable to travel on.

Stopped at Annecy for the night, a beautiful little city on a lake from which rise gorgeous mountains. The hostel

* French eat lots of crusty white bread with their meals, & it comes in loaves two & three feet long, & each hostler would clasp our loaf to his bosom & carve off a hunk - & hostlers bosoms aren't the cleanest breadboards in the world!

is a "dive" - don't think its ³ ever been cleaned, but everyone is very gay & we enjoyed it. All the hostlers ate at the cafe' across the street - in the back room - we were: One Englishman, ~~two~~ ^a French ~~girl~~ couple, a girl from Yugoslavia, two boys from Java, a Swenske fellow, & me two Americans - & what should the housefather be but a German Jew Refugee! *

Have discovered that all French towns are "blocked out" at night now for fear of air raids, so we all stumbled about in the dark & down to the lake for the moonlight view. Cars carry only parking lights or headlights pointed blue or covered with paper or cloth of that color, & the cafes are shuttered tight or throw only this eerie blue light, & as you approach you discover they are full of people &

very busy behind their closed-up appearance) - some have orchestra music coming fantastically out of the darkness. Back at the A.J. (L'auberge de la Jeunesse - Youth hostel) we had to close shutters & pull curtains before could turn on the lights to get ready for bed.

An official at the trench border today told some tourists who asked if he weren't worried: "We shall remain calm in the brave hope that nothing more shall happen - ^{but} if War comes, we shall all do our duty - we are Frenchmen!" I like that, don't you?

Stopped at fashionable Aix-les-Bains next day only long enough to have fun trying to buy lingerie in my text-book French. Loved cycling thru this countryside - gorgeous mountains

* Cycled a ways with a Russian refugee today but didn't learn much as he didn't seem to speak the same brand of French!

views & such exhilarating⁻⁵⁻ air & sunshine - our first real taste of summer so far! See soldiers all about, as are very close to the Italian border - there are ~~no~~ so many older men in uniform - understand the best class has been called out. *

Phe took the wrong road today when she was far ahead & when she discovered her mistake I was about an hour's ride ahead of her, blithely unconscious of it - she stopped a soldier on motor-cycle & gave him a note to give to me, but as she speaks no ~~English~~^{French} & he spoke no English, of course I never got the note. So when I arrived at Grenoble & Phe wasn't anywhere around & I had no handbook, I went to the Police Station & got the A.D. address. Phe came into the city limits & couldn't find me, & though she had the

hostel handbook, she couldn't understand any French directions. She was plenty worried, & had just thought "It's high time St. Christopher took a hand in this", when I came cycling back from the Police Station, not even following their directions - something ~~xxx~~ prompting me to ride along this road, & we bumped into each other on the corner! After 76 miles in heat.

A.J. here another dive, housefather yodeling to us out the fourth-floor window as we came along! He couldn't speak English, but was the manager of the restaurant there & wanted us to sit right down & eat, but he was so mild looking & we wanted to bathe first, so he got a young fellow to cycle us across town to the A.J. dormitories. Are in an uncompleted new apt. bldg., approached

7

thru the garage, but only two bare
rooms with cots, but to our utter
amazement there was a cold shower
that actually worked - our first one so
far! Boys have to enter their dorm.
thru the girls', & we have to get to
messroom thru theirs? - Of course
the French think nothing of this, but
rather ~~is~~ embarrassing to us & the
three English fellows there that nite.

Looked up a young American
engineering student here & after he
helped us do some shopping, we
had lunch with the French family
with whom he lives - The Captain
was home to dinner in uniform -
being on a secret mission - which
~~mostly~~ ^{mainly} consisted of going into the mts.
to get his Alpine tent to live in at the air-
field, as his quarters were too far away &
both quarters & transportation pretty abominable!

Enjoy French food - after Germany's everlasting meat, potatoes & gravy.

Had lettuce in oil first, then sausages & lima beans, then a gorgeous omelette, then fresh fruits & cheeses, ^{pretty} coffee & cream - & all thru each course we ate big hunks of bread (no butter ever) & drank red wine mixed with cold water. Brings ~~us~~ ^a view a little closer to sit beside an officer in uniform & see his wife looking tragic at his departure.

Stayed over another night & when ~~three~~ ^{two} more girls showed up, we all moved into boys' dorm. as seven beds in there & only three in the girls'. Awoke next A.M. to discover that our Spanish refugee housefather hadn't thought it necessary to change his sleeping sack to other dorm., & so there he was,

calmly ~~cozily~~ sleeping away with the four of us! We are beginning to understand the explanations we had heard about French hostels not being so much to look at but very cozy!

We cycled for about an hour & then ate fruit & cheese in a farmer's field; Phe adding pears to her breakfast - from under the trees in the farmer's orchard! Cycled 74 miles today thru the lovely ~~xxxx~~ scenery, & arrived at little La Roche de Glan in a cloudburst that stung as it hit. First thing the houseparents said was "What are you doing here?" in utter amazement, & it was then we learned that Germany had attacked Poland & there was to be general mobilization in England & France. All dashed next door to City Hall just

then as housemother shouted something
 unintelligible (I need peace & quiet to
 understand long involved French
 sentences!), & disconcerted two officers
 just tacking up the Order of General
 mobilization! We & the rest of the village
 had just gotten over this shock when
 housefather rushed out & said a German
 hosteler had just arrived! She was
 bathing upstairs so Rhe & I had to dash
 up & tell her the Mayor requested her
 presence immediately. Then we & the other
 villagers trooped her over to the City Hall
 & peered over the Mayor's shoulder as
 he read her passport. She had been
 staying in some little place in the
 Alps for her vacation & didn't know
 Germany had attacked Poland, & said
 she didn't believe it anyway as papers
 here didn't print the truth! Mayor had

to phone headquarters to get permission for her to sleep & eat at hostel tonight!

Enjoyed a good dinner - throwing hunks of bread into our soup & drinking it noisily along with the others! Even the little children of the houseparents had weak wine with all their meals.

After dinner we all went off with ~~two~~ a young & beautiful Spanish girl refugee & her handsome brother, & the only other hostler who was returning to Paris next day to be mobilized, to the Artists' house - said artist being quite famous & exhibiting at Beaux Arts in Paris, etc., but & very well to-do, but preferring to live in this lovely little village on the banks of the Rhone & "becheloing" it in his beautiful originally designed house &

studio. (Picture us all trooping down there in the pitch blackness, with four big jugs of wine in tow — I kept thinking of ^{John Steinbeck's} ~~the~~ ^{story} "Tortilla Flats").

Danced & drank wine & looked at the artist's lovely portrait of the Spanish girl, & others, & about midnight the houseparents felt so sad they went home, leaving us in care of their ~~other~~ hosteler friend. (The housefather has to leave in two days for the Alps on the Italian border, & feels tragic at leaving his young wife & their two little boys.)

The soon-to-be ^{soldier} ~~Paris~~ from Paris wanted to have one last good party & we felt ~~at~~ the least ~~to~~ we could do was help to make his last free night a gay one, so, though Che & I had

had a hard hot day, we drank wine & danced (half of the time with our eyes closed) & about 2:00 A.M. Ramon & I went up to his house & gathered up some ~~of~~ bread, cheese, pate, & chocolate, & back to the party for breakfast! The soldier finally let us go home at 3:30 in the morning! — After three months' of retiring between nine & ten, we were dead on our feet! And as Phe speaks only German & English, I was the only one she could talk to the whole evening, but both my French & Spanish came in for a good exercise!

After a boating date with Ramon, & another wine-soaked meal, we watched the gay young soldier off ~~from~~ being kissed on both cheeks in true French fashion, & then left ourselves, being advised

To take a train from nearby Valence
~~to~~ for Bordeaux, as our plan to go
 to Marseilles was a dangerous one, it
 being evacuated of ^{women} children & filled
 with troops, including the ~~ones~~ ^{blocks} from
 French Morocco.

Cycled the few miles into Valence
 & ran into our soldier friend who
 showed us his orders & free train ride to
 Paris on a troop train, & insisted on our
 being kissed French fashion again - this
 time in front of a busy sidewalk cafe!
 Started off for the station & in a crowd
 reading late news bulletins, discovered
 the Canadian fellow with whom we
 had cycled from Mürberg to Murrich
 the month before! at the station we
 discovered there were no trains to be
 had as all were taken over by the
 Government to aid in mobilization &
 movement of troops. So nothing's

left to do but start out cycling
for Bordeaux - on the other side of

France! Our faithful steeds now
took on new value in our eyes
as the only means of transportation
left for us!

(Just got hold of some ink!)

Next day we cycled 100 kilometers
(62 miles) through the heat of the day,
people staring at us with mouths wide
open as we hurtled through the wee
quiet villages. The A. J. at Montdragon
was supposedly closed, the beds all
at the disposal of the War Ministry
for ^{pages for} soldiers, but when we handed
them our tragic tale of three
American refugees forced to flee
the country on bikes, the very
kind ~~A~~ house parents set up a
bed for "Louie" & gave "Delphine"
& I one of their own beds.

(We feel like we are ^{among} in the days of the French Revolution, + Phis called Madame De Farge or Delphine, + ~~Im~~ called the Canadian is "Louie", + Im Marie (Antoinette) because I always want to buy cake instead of bread to eat for lunch!)

We all retired to the river at the back door of the hostel + washed our clothes + ~~the~~ "undies" at the river bank + then soaped each others' backs + rinsed off with a good swim!

Enjoyed a good homecooked dinner as much as we could with a hundred flies crawling through the soup bowls + wine glasses! The radio news told about the sinking of the "Athenia" with Americans

and Canadians aboard & the
houseparents looked at us in a most
pitying way. -17-

Herein bed about an hour when a
voice called up out of the darkness
outside. It was a lone trench girl
hostler who was hurrying to Paris
to offer her services to the
Government. She was terribly
worried as she thinks her parents
have been evacuated & doesn't have
any idea where they are.

Left after the rain had cleared next
a. m. & I had rescued my new blue
parties - hung them on the roof to
dry night before & they had blown
down into a mud puddle where
the chickens were curiously
pecking away at them! (The
are usually flying undies or
socks ^{off} from our luggage straps
as we travel along - adds to
our general refugee appearance
& causes houseparents to cluck over us, in

a most satisfying manner!

The air weather & scenery are so gorgeous down here in the Valley of the Rhone that it makes us feel a bit guilty that we are enjoying it all so much! In the aft. we passed one enormous grape field that was just too much to pass up, so picked each a perfectly luscious bunch of blue crisp grapes & sat across the road under an olive orchard & gorged ourselves!

~~The~~ Hummy sight at the lovely villa hostel at Nimes next A.M. as we three & the Italian refugee hosteler all trooped down to the garden pump, & ~~Bob~~ "Delphy" & I ^{merrily} ~~stood~~ ^{soaked} with our ~~our~~ feet in the ^{the} tub & the two fellows lathered & shaved at a basin on the garden wall! The ^{young} ~~station~~ ~~man~~

Louie told us today that in Munich
he wanted to get into their famous museum at
student prices but had forgotten to bring his card,
so just flashed his "Halifax Life Insurance" one & sailed
in at half price!

-20-

As we cycled down, the hills
sometimes closed in on us
in an eerie fashion, & then
again would spread out around
us in plains to the distant
mountains.

Met an engaging "Concierge"
of an estate who took us
over to a lovely clean & airy
factory for a drink of their
famous mineral ~~water~~ ^{water}, &
to talk to our first English ^{English}-speaking
stranger in days - a Londoner
who had a couple bullets in
him from the last war &
was ready to go again. . . . we
feel like fanatic pacifists when
we disagree with a veteran soldier
on war patriotism, but think our
generation feels different - in every
country we have been the people our
age & think nothing but self-defense is

mouth a battle, ⁻²¹⁻ & they have all
said: "Keep America out of the
next war so there'll be some
civilization left somewhere
on this globe."

Le Grand de Roi is a perfect
honey of a fishing village &
the A. J. is right on the
sand beach - & deserted, as
they all are now. Had a
swim & a walk at night
& another of each ~~for~~ next day
before breakfast.

To avoid a long cycle back over
the way we had come, we took a
shortcut & cycled ~~ten~~ ^{ten} miles along
the sand, part of the time thru
the shallow water - it was
wonderful, the beach deserted
save for the brilliant sun &
the wind tossed sand, &
the three refugees who
flitted along like the tireless
spirits of sailors ~~XXXX~~ ^{since} gone!

Bought tomatoes & melons &
 rolls & cheese & cake in the
 open market at Montpelier &
 ate & dozed a while in a
 lovely park we discovered on
 the outskirts of town. It's a
 constant amazement to us -
 the grave concern we spend
 over planning a meal & the
 almost superhuman enjoyment
 we derive from it! But
 then the 83 miles we were
 making ^{that} ~~today~~ day is not to
 be sneezed at - the aft.
 being spent in walking our
 cycles up ^{& up} ~~to~~ on the queer
 Mt. roads - the French are
 marvellous cooks & famous
 soldiers, but don't think there's
 an engineer among 'em!

Had to cycle fast & hard to make the hostel at Mous La Trivalle, & didn't arrive till 9:00 P.M., the sun having set with alacrity about 7:30, & we cycled along in single file, disappearing & reappearing like ghouls over the darkening hills. ^{Le Père} ~~The~~ Père-Aubergiste (housefather) was a perfect darling, met us on the dark hill, parked our bikes, & took us down to the villoge for dinner, & then to his house for preserved grapes which packed such a terrific wallop that we all three practically fell asleep on 'em — after Delphy had gulped down a whole jug of water to cool her mouth — this drinking of water was the funniest thing the grand-father had seen in ages, & he took a fancy to Delphy & engaged himself in long monologues, with her though we told him she couldn't understand a bit of it!

Then up some more dark mountain
to the darling little a. j. with a balcony
hanging over a ledge, and the
one down. — & there we were
left for the night..... Crawled
into our sleeping sacks & onto
the straw mattresses, & were
~~at~~ asleep before we could
figure out whether Louie was
sleeping in the girls' dorm. or
me in the Men's!

Spent the next a. m. in
washing & airing our clothes
on the sunbaked walls that
enclosed the gardens built on
the hills nearby — with their
queer irrigation system which con-
sisted of sweeping water from the
spring into a gutter, which
in turn filled the little stone

* (which explains the "plushy" style in which they live, Louise says!)
 pools along the garden, + from which the water was brushed onto the plants + shrubs.

She climbed a wall between two deserted stone huts + found a luscious peach tree!

Went down to say goodbye to the housefather + discovered him to be the Major. ~~He~~ he turned away from the seven ^{beautiful} dark-eyed men he was interviewing, to stamp our hostel cards + get us to shake hands all over again with his family.

(He shake hands with laundry-girls + majors ^{of} indiscriminately now - think it's a jolly idea.)

Cycled lazily thru the afternoon, plucking ~~some~~ grapes + pears + plums along the way.

Could find no hostel in our hand-
book which we could make that
night, & as hostlers become
too tight to spend money on
anything as plushy as a hotel,
decided to sleep out! Stopped
at Mazamet for food & then
raced to beat the darkness
until found a ^{piece} soft field behind
a hedge. Had collected wood for
a fire & were about to settle

down when a farmer drove a
whole herd of cattle into our little
estate! However, after ~~a~~ the first
few cows had looked us over
with grave concern they all retired
to a distant corner of the field &
left us alone (were quite elated
to think we passed approval!).
Ate baked beans, tomatoes, cheese, ^{potatoes} toast &
butter, & finished up with a whole box

of cakes & a litre of red wine
(7¢, including the bottle!)
I sat ^{to hide} ~~around~~ the fire ^{as against the} & talked
low to have one for fear of planes, &
^{talked} till all hours - we all think
we're quite amusing & enjoy
ourselves immensely! Placed
the bikes in a semi-circle about
us, with the trees in back, &
then put on ~~all~~ practically all
the clothes we had ^{plus} ~~down~~ ^{down} ~~our~~ ^{own} ~~respects~~.
Went to sleep
with a club at Louie's head,
Delphy's Hitler knife unsheathed,
& my tear gas pen loaded & ready!
(The German bombers ^{wouldn't} ~~had~~ ~~not~~
have a chance!)

Awake about 2:30 to find
Louie standing by the dying embers,
his white ^{pojoma} ~~py~~ bottoms ^{showing} ~~hanging~~ beneath
his dark cam duroy shorts, a multitude
of sweaters of varying length, & engaged
in tying a Scottish wool scarf about
his head, & having hysterics at the

may we looked! I joined him in his hysterics, while Delphy slept serenely on under the multitudinous winking stars, her kid-gloved hands naively tucked beneath her head.

Bathed in the cow's drinking pool & ate the leftovers, & were on the highway early, feeling better than ever before, & ~~cycled~~ biked along, singing & doing ~~but~~ cycle tricks. Pretty hot down here now, so enjoy a siesta each day after lunch, & stop & eat at least two dishes of ice cream & several gooey pastries about four o'clock. Always make friends of the proprietor & get to see all their maps & secure benefit of their knowledge of roads, etc.

Louely A. J. here with fountain
in the garden, & grand Mère-
Aubergiste who did a beautiful
job of mothering us, even
giving us some of grand mother's
fresh plum jam! ~~met~~ Only other
hostler here was a beautiful
young Polish girl who can't
get home, of course, & has
no idea what has happened
to her family - they were
living in Varsovie! All these
tragic refugees merely shrug &
say "C'est la guerre!" (That's
War!)

Stopped in a little village
next day to get a drink at the
public pump, & all the women
were busily washing clothes, pounding them
with what looked like pingpong paddles! When
I asked them if I could take a picture they were
aghast - assured me it was against the law during war!

There are notices published in each town, ^{some} advising the people that a state of war exists, & urging them to remain calm, & increase their friendliness & helpfulness to each other; & others, describing the kinds of gas & inflammatorary bombs that may be dropped, & instructing them as to gas masks & air raid shelters. We feel ^{pretty much} ~~quite~~ unprepared ourselves.

Said "Yah" a couple times today instead of "Oui" when getting instructions as to the way to go, & the women became angry & demanded to know if we were Germans. Thought for a while they'd call the Police. We always gather ^{quite} a crowd when we ask directions, & usually cycle off leaving a couple of them fighting as to the correct turn to take at the next town! Have usually been asked if we were English or Belgian, but now

it's usually "Are you refugees
from Alsace-Lorraine?"

~~As a solid plan stopped~~
~~in a little village today to buy groceries~~

Hostel at the next town was
all full of refugees, but after visiting
the Mayor, were taken to a hotel
& given a room with hot running water
(luxury of luxuries) & two big beds,
the soldier-housefather carefully ex-
plaining that one was for the
young man & the other for the
young girls! Here so tired & hungry, &
this struck us so funny, that we
sat on the stairs & long had hysterics
the little maid getting a huge kick
out of it and all. Louie says it's going to
be awfully lonesome for him when he
goes back to Canada where ^{are no} there girls
~~are~~ sleeping in ~~his room~~ ^{his room} ~~is room~~!

To church in the A.M. where much
noise & confusion is caused by the fact that the
kneeling bench is under the hinged seat of the choir &
we constantly got up & turned the choir & then walked around

the change from a kneeling to a sitting position.

Sincer to see only women & old men & children
at church, with soldiers all away.

When we stopped in a little village today
to shop, a "solid citizen" stopped & delivered a
lecture to us all for wearing shorts.
Funny morals these French have,
~~nothing~~ no objection to Louie's
sleeping in same room with us,
but go ~~so~~ Puritanical at sight of a
suntanned knee!

Another nice nest site & then a
darling little house at Tolouac, with
Maya welcoming us, finished our mad
flight across France! We enjoyed our
selves more than we have for
ages, but think ~~partly~~ ^{partly} of Louie's
reaction against ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~idea~~ ^{idea}
~~of~~ ^{of} having to go to war &
shoot ~~at~~ at the German fellows
who were all so friendly &
kind to us, & against rights
of ~~these~~ ^{quiet} older men ~~who~~ ^{who} pulled
themselves wearily out of the straw stream
on ^{damp} basement floors where ~~they~~ ^{some} are
now spending their nights as soldiers!
The French are famous as soldiers, but
they're not the gay & adventurous ones we
read about; they're men with ~~families~~
families & homes & harvests ~~being~~ ^{to be}
attended to, but doing their duty for
all of it. And I saw a ~~man~~ ^{man} ~~who~~
who had lost his leg in the Great War, stop
to light a cigarette - & at his back was a
glorious ^{war} monument to the fact that "These Men
Have Not Died in Vain" - we think they have.

So now we sit at Bordeaux, & thousands
of Americans go from ~~the~~ one mad house which is the U.S.
Consulate to another, which is the U.S. Shipping Lines, &
frantically ask "How can I get home?"

We have a chance at a French troop ship to
Central America, or a cycle trip thru Spain to try our luck at
Lisbon, Portugal. We would love to see the good old U.S.A. now!

Lots of love & hope to see you soon!

Bordeaux, France
Sept. 15, '39 - Friday

Marcel Muth & All,

Why hasn't any mail been forwarded to me here from Rome & Marseilles ??? it couldn't be because there is no mail there - could it? Was expecting heaps of it & there isn't a card. So just for that I won't write at all about Switzerland (you can read it in my log later) except to say that we visited one day at a gorgeous Swiss chalet - you'll see pictures of it & of the ducky bathroom - am mailing the snaps today under separate covers mostly human interest ones.

Well, it was in Geneva that we discovered just how serious the European political situation was becoming - the Consul said the best advice was for us to remain in Switzerland but it is too expensive to linger there for long & then couldn't get a boat till they ran evacuation trains out. - They are horrible things - so we decided it was better to come to France - Consul then said we'd better make a dash for it as the border might close anytime - so we hopped on our bikes & crossed the border when wayons were pulled across the road - & big files of barbed wire were waiting to be tramped across. We were lucky to get over so easily as a couple of fellows got on barricaded roads next day & had to keep changing directions & one cycled hard all day & by evening was still only 8 miles from Geneva.

② There were 2 separate French borders to cross - The Customs' officer wouldn't tell us why. Council had told us we were lucky to have our cycles as trains are not dependable now & very crowded & uncomfortable.

Stopped at Annecy for the night - a beautiful little city on a lake from which rise "gorgeous mountains". The hostel is a "dive" - don't think it's ever been cleaned, but everyone is very gay & we enjoyed it. All the hostlers ate at the cafe across the street - in the back room. We were: one Englishman, a French couple, a girl from Yugoslavia, 2 boys from Java, a Swedish fellow, & we 2 Americans - & what should the housefather be but a German Jew Refugee!

The French eat lots of crusty white bread with their meals. It comes in loaves 2 or 3 ft. long, each hostler would clasp his loaf to his bosom & carve off a hunk - & hostlers' bosoms aren't the cleanest breadboards in the world!

Have discovered that all French towns are "black-out" at night now for fear of air raids - so we all stumbled about in the dark & down to the lake for the moonlight view. Cars carry only parking lights or headlights painted blue or covered with paper or cloth that color, & the cafes are shuttered tight or throw only this eerie blue light, & as you approach you discover they are full of people & very busy behind their closed-up appearance. Some have orchestra music coming faintly out of the darkness. Back at the 99 (L'Auberge de la Jeunesse - Youth Hostel) we had to

③ close shutters & pull curtains before we could turn on lights to get ready for bed.

Our official at the French border today told some tourists who asked if he weren't worried, "We shall remain calm in the brave hope that nothing more shall happen - but if war comes, we shall do our duty - we are Frenchmen!" I like that - don't you?

Stopped at fashionable Aix-les-Bains next day only long enough to have fun trying to buy lingerie in my text-book French. Loved cycling thru this countryed - gorgeous mountain views & such exhilarating air & sunshine - our first real taste of summer so far! See soldiers all about, so we are very close to the Italian border - there are so many older men in uniform - understand the last class has been called out.

Cycled for a way with a Russian refugee today but didn't learn much as we didn't seem to speak the same brand of French!

Rhe took the wrong road today when she was far ahead, & when she discovered her mistake I was about an hour's ride ahead of her - blithely unconscious of it. She stopped a soldier on motor-cycle & gave him a note to give to me, but as she spoke no French & he spoke no English - of course I never got the note.

So when I arrived at Grenoble & Rhe wasn't anywhere around & I had no handbook, I went to the Police Station & got the A.J. address. Rhe came into the city limits & couldn't find me, and tho she had the hostel handbook, she

4) Couldn't understand French directions. She was plenty worried & had just that - "the high time St Christopher took a hand in this" when I came cycling back from the Police Station, not even following their directions - something prompting me to ride along this road, & we bumped into each other on the corner! After 76 miles in the heat.

A. J. here another dear, housefather yodelling to us out the 4th floor window as we came along! He couldn't speak English, but was the manager of the restaurant there & wanted us to sit right down & eat - but he was so wild looking & we wanted to bathe first - so he got a young fellow to cycle us across town to the A. J. dormitories. They're in an uncompleted new apt. bldg. ~~the~~ approached thru the garage & found only 2 bare rooms with cots, but to our utter amazement there was a cold shower that actually worked - our first one so far! Boys have to enter their dorm thru the girls' & we have to get to the washroom thru theirs. Of course the French think nothing of this, but it was rather embarrassing to us & the 3 English fellows there that nite.

Looked up a young American engineering student here & after he helped us do some shopping, we had lunch with the French family with whom he lives. The Captain came home to dinner in uniform - being on a

secret mission - which mainly consisted of going into the mts. to get his Alpine tent - to live in at the air-field - as his quarters were too far away & both quarters & transportation pretty abominable.

(Enjoying French food - after Germany's everlasting meat - potatoes & gravy.)

Had lettuce in oil - first, then sausages & lima beans, then gorgeous omelette, then fresh fruits & cheeses, & lastly coffee & cream - & all these each course we ate big hunks of bread (no butter ever) & drank red wine mixed with cold water.

Brings the war a little closer to sit beside an officer in uniform & see his wife looking tragic at his departure.

Stayed over another night & when 2 more girls showed up, we all moved into the boys' dorm as seven beds in there & only 3 in girls'. Awoke next AM to discover that our Spanish refugee housefather hadn't that it necessary to change his sleeping sack to the other dorm - so there he was, calmly sleeping away with the 4 of us.

We are beginning to understand the explanations we had heard about French hostiles not being much to look at but very crazy.

We cycled for about an hour & then ate fruit & cheese in a farmer's field. The adding pears to his breakfast - from under the trees in the farmer's orchard! Cycled 74 mi today thru the lovely scenery. & arrived at

La Roche de Glun in a cloudburst that
struck as it hit. First thing the houseparents
said was, "What are you doing here?" in utter
amazement, & it was then we learned that
Germany had attacked Poland & there was to
be general mobilization in England & France.

All dashed next door to City Hall just then as
housefather shouted something unintelligible (I
need peace & quiet to understand long &
involved French sentences) & discovered
2 officers just taking up the Order of General
Mobilization! We & the rest of the village had
just gotten over this shock when housefather
pushed out & said a German hostler had
just arrived! She was bathing upstairs so
Rhe & I had to dash up & tell her the Mayor
requested her presence immediately. Then
we & the other villagers trooped her over to
the City Hall & all peered over the Mayor's
shoulder as he read her passport. She had
been staying in some little place in the
Mts. for her vacation & didn't know Germany
had attacked Poland & she said she didn't
believe it anyway as papers here didn't
print the truth! Mayor had to phone
headquarters to get permission for her to
sleep & eat at hostel tonight.

Enjoyed a good dinner - throwing hunks
of bread into our soup & drinking it
noisily along with the others. Even the
little children of the houseparents had weak

wine with their meals.

After dinner we all went off with a beautiful young Spaniards girl Refugee & her handsome brother & the only other hostler (who was returning to Paris next day to be mobilized) to the artists' house - (said artist being quite famous - exhibits at Beaux Arts in Paris, etc. & but quite well-to-do - but preferring to live in this lovely little village on the banks of the Rhone & "bacheloring" it in his beautiful - originally designed house and studio! Picture was all traoping down there in the pitch blackness with 4 big jugs of wine. (I kept thinking of John Steinbeck's "Tortilla Flats")

Danced & drank wine & looked at the artists lovely portrait of the Spaniards girl & others & about midnite the houseparents felt so sad they went home, leaving us in care of their hostler friend (The housefather had to leave in 2 days for the Alps on the Italian border, & feels tragic at leaving his young wife & their 2 little boys)

The soon-to-be-soldier from Paris wanted to have one last good party & we felt the least we could do was help to make his last free night a gay one - so - the Rhe & I had had a hard hot day, we drank wine & danced (half the time with our eyes closed) & about 2AM Ramon & I went up to his house & gathered up some bread, cheese, pate, & chocolate - then back to the party for breakfast. The soldier

Finally let us go home at 3:30 in the morning. After 3 months of retiring between 9 & 10 we were dead on our feet. And as she speaks only German & English, I was the only one she could talk to the whole evening - but both my French & Spanish came in for good exercise.

After a boating date with Ramon & another wine-soaked meal, we watched the gay young soldier of - first being kissed on both cheeks in true French fashion, & then left ourselves, being advised to take a train from nearby Valence for Bourdeaux, as our plan to go to Marseilles was a dangerous one - its evacuated of women & children & filled with troops, including the blacks from French Morocco.

Cycled the few miles into Valence & ran into our soldier friend who showed us his orders & free train ticket to Paris on a troop train, I insisted on kissing us French fashion again - this time in front of a busy sidewalk cafe.

Started off for the station & in a crowd reading late news bulletins discovered the Canadian fellow with whom we had cycled from Nurnberg to Munich the month before. At the station we discovered there were no trains to be had as all were taken over by the Government to aid in mobilization & movement of troops. So nothing left but to start cycling toward Bourdeaux - on the other side of France! Our faithful steeds now took on new value in our eyes as the only means of transportation left us.

9) Next day we cycled 100 kilometers (62 miles) thru the heat of the day, people staring at us open-mouthed as we hurtled ~~on~~ thru the quiet villages.

The A.G. at Montdragon was supposedly closed, the beds all at the disposal of the War Ministry for refugees or soldiers - but when we told them our tale of 3 American refugees forced to flee their country on bikes - the very kind houseparents set up a bed for "Louie" & gave "Delphine" & me one of their own beds.

(We feel like we are living in the days of the French Revolution, & Rhe's called "Madame de Targi" or "Delphine", the Canadian is "Louie", & I'm "Marie (Antoinette)" (because I always want to buy cake instead of bread for lunch)

We all retired to the river at the back-door of the hostel & washed our undies at the river bank & then soaped each other's backs & rinsed off with a good swim.

Enjoyed a home-cooked dinner so much as we could with a hundred flies crawling thru the soupbowl & wineglasses! The radio news told of the sinking of the "Athenia" with Americans and Canadians aboard - and the houseparents looked at us in a most pitying way.

Were in bed about an hour when a voice called up out of the darkness outside. It was a lone French girl hostler who was hurrying

"All we've observed there's no love lost between the Italians and the Germans.

Had a grand time prowling around the sunbaked, empty Roman Ruins here in the AM - were sorry we hadn't carried along our sleeping sacks so we could stride about in makeshift togas.

Were so near the Mediterranean & as "Louie" & I had never seen it ("Delphy" had once vacationed on the Riviera) we decided to make for the A. J. there.

As we cycled down, the hills sometimes closed in on us in an eerie fashion, then again would spread out around us in plains to the distant mts.

Louie told us today that in Munich he wanted to get into their famous museum at student prices but had forgotten to bring his card - so just flashed his "Halifax Life Ins." one & sailed in at half price.

Met an engaging "Concierge" of an estate who took us over to a lovely clean & airy factory for a drink of their famous mineral water & to talk to our first English speaking stranger in days - a Londoner who had a couple of bullets in him from the last war & was ready to go again - we were like fanatic pacifists when we disagree with a veteran soldier on our patriotism but think our generation feels differently. In every country we have been in the young people think nothing but self-defense is worth a battle & they have all said: "Keep America out of the next war. so there'll be some

12 civilization left somewhere on this globe."

Le Grand Roi is a perfect honey & a fishing village & the C.F. is right on the sandy beach - and deserted - as they all are now. Had a swim & a walk at night - and another of each next day before breakfast. To avoid a long cycle trip back over the way we had come - we took a shortcut & cycled 10 miles along the shore - part of the time thru the shallow water. It was wonderful - the beach was deserted save for the brilliant sun & the wind tossed sand & the 3 refugees.

Bought tomatoes & melons - rolls & cheese & cake in the open market at Montpellier & ate & lozed a while in a lovely park we discovered on the outskirts of town.

It's a constant amezement to us - the grave concerns we give to planning a meal & the almost superhuman enjoyment we derive from it. But then 83 miles we were making that day is not to be sneezed at - the aft. being spent walking our cycles up & up on the queer mt. roads. The French are marvelous cooks and famous soldiers but we don't think there's an engineer among 'em.

Had to cycle fast & hard to make the hostel at Mous la Trivalle & didn't arrive till 9PM. The sun set with alacrity about 7:30. We cycled along in single file, disappearing & reappearing like ghosts over the darkening hills.

Le Pire - Aubergiste (housefather) was a perfect darling - met us on the dark hill - parked our bikes - & took us down to the village for dinner - & then to his house for

13) preserved grapes which packed such a
terrible wallop that we all 3 practically fell
asleep on 'em - after "Delphy" had gulped
down a whole jug of water to cool her mouth -
this drinking of water was the funniest
thing the grandfather had seen in ages. He
took a fancy to "Delphy" + engaged himself
in long monologues with her - tho we told
him she couldn't understand a bit of it.

Then up some more dark mts. to the darling
little A.J. with a balcony hanging over a
ledge - and one dorm - and there we were
left for the night. Crawled into our sleeping
sacks + onto the straw mattresses + were
asleep before we could figure out whether
"Louie" was sleeping in the girls' dorm or
we were in the 'mens'.

Spent the next AM washing + airing our
clothes on the sunbaked walls that enclosed
the gardens on the hills near by - with their
quiescent irrigation system which consisted of
sweeping water from the spring into a gutter
which in turn filled the little stone pools
along the garden - + from which water is
brushed onto the plants + shrubs.

She climbed a wall between 2 deserted
stone huts + found a tree with luscious peaches.
Went down to say goodbye to the housefather
+ found out he is the mayor. (which explains
the "plushy" style in which they live - "Louie" says)
He - the mayor-housefather - turned away from
the 7 beautiful dark-eyed men he was interviewing
to stamp our hostel card. + have us shake
hands all over again with his family. (We shake
hands with laundry girls + mayors quite indis-

14
Criminately now - think its a jolly idea)
Cycled lazily thru the afternoon, plucking
pears & plums along the way.

Could find no hostel in our handbook
which we could make that nite & as hostlers
become too tight to spend money on anything
as "plushy" as a hotel - we decided to sleep out.
Stopped at Mezamet for food & then raced to
beat the darkness until we found a nice
soft field behind a hedge. Had collected
wood for a fire & were about to settle down
when a farmer drove a whole herd of cattle
into our little estate. However, after the
first few cows had looked us over with
grave concern, they all retired to a distant
corner of the field & left us alone (were
quite elated to think we were approved)
ate baked beans, tomatoes, cheese, chocolate,
toast & butter, & finished up with a whole
box of cakes & a litre of red wine (including
the bottle).

Sat close to hide the fire (so its against
the law to have one for fear of planes)
and talked till all hours - we all think
we're quite amusing & enjoy ourselves
immensely.

Placed the bikes in a semicircle about
us - with the trees at our backs - then
put on practically all the clothes we had &
laid on our raincoats. Went to sleep with
a club at "Louie's" head, "Delphy's" Hitler
youth knife unsheathed, & my tear-gas pen
loaded & ready. (The German bombers
wouldnt have had a show against us)

I wake about 2:30 to see Louie standing by the dying embers - his white pajamas trousers showing below his dark corduroy shorts - a multitude of sweaters of varying lengths - & engaged in tying a Scottish wool scarf about his head - & having hysterics at the way we looked. I joined him in the hysterics - while "Delphy" slept serenely under the winking stars - her kid-gloved hands tucked beneath her head.

Bathed in the cow's drinking pool - ate the leftovers - & were on the highway early - feeling better than ever before.

Biked along - singing & doing cycle tricks. Pretty hot down here now so enjoy a siesta each day after lunch. Stop & eat at least 2 dishes of ice cream & several gooey pastries about 4 o'clock. Always make friends of the proprietors & get to see their maps & secure benefit of their knowledge ^{of routes}.

Lovely A. J. here with fountain in the garden & grand ^{Mère} - aubergiste who did a beautiful job of mothering us - even giving us some of grandmother's fresh plum jam.

Only other hostler here was a beautiful young Polish girl who can't get home, of course, & has no idea what has happened to her family - they were living in Varsovie. All these tragic refugees merely shrug & say, "C'est la guerre!"

Stopped in a little village next day to get a drink at the public pump, & all the women were busily washing clothes, pounding them with what looked like

16) ping-pong paddles. When I asked them if I could take a picture they were aghast - assured me it was against the law during ^{war}.

There are notices published in each town ^{some} advising the people that a state of war exists & urging them to remain calm - to increase their friendliness & helpfulness to each other - and others describing the kinds of gas & inflammatories bombs that may be dropped, & instructing them as to gas-masks and air raid shelters. We feel pretty much unprepared ourselves.

Said "Yah" a couple of times today instead of "Oui" when getting instructions on our way. The woman became angry & demanded to know if we were Germans. That for a while she'd call the police.

We always gather quite a crowd when we ask directions & usually cycle off leaving a couple of them fighting about the correct turn to take at the next town.

Usually we're asked if we're English or Belgian, but now its mostly "Are you refugees from Alsace-Lorraine?"

Hostel at next town was full of refugees - but after visiting the mayor - were taken to a hotel & given a room with hot-running-water (luxury of luxuries) & 2 big beds - the soldier-housefather carefully explaining that one was for the young man & the other for the young girls.

Were so tired & hungry & this struck us so funny - that we sat on the stairs & had hysterics - the little maid getting a huge kick out of it & us. "Louie says

It's going to be awfully lonesome for him when he goes back to Canada where there'll be no girls sleeping in his room.

To church in the AM where much noise and confusion is caused by the fact that the kneeling bench is under the heized seat of the choir & we were constantly getting up to turn the chair - then walk around it to change from a kneeling to a sitting position - and vice versa.

I never to see only women, old men, & children at church, with the soldiers all away.

When we stopped in a little village today to shop - a "solid citizen" stopped & delivered a lecture to us all for wearing shorts. Ienny morals these French people have - no objection to "Louie's" sleeping in the same room with us - but go puritanical at sight of a sunburned knee!

Another dive next mite & then a sailing little house at Iolance, with the Mayor welcoming us at the finish of our "Mad flight across France"

We enjoyed ourselves more than we have in ages - but think part of it was reaction to the dislike of "Louie's" having to go to war & shoot at the German fellows who were all so friendly & kind to us - & against sights of fine old men pulling themselves wearily out of the straw strewn on damp basement floors where some are now spending their nites as soldiers.

The French are famous as soldiers - but they're not the gay & adventurous one we read about - they're men with families, homes, & harvests to be attended to - but doing their patriotic duty for all of it.

18 I saw a veteran who had lost his leg in the Great War stop & light a cigarette — at his back was a glorified War monument to the fact that "These men have not died in vain" — we think they have.

So now we sit in Bordeaux — & thousands of Americans go from one mad-house which is the U.S. Consulate to another mad house which is the U.S. Shipping Lines & ask frantically, "How can we get home?"

We have a chance to get on a French Troop ship to Central America or a cycle trip thru Spain to try our luck at Lisbon, Portugal. We would love to see the good old U. S. A. right now.

Lots of love, kisses & hope to see you soon.

Love
Juddie