



Charles W. and Mary Lesley Ames Family Papers

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PARIS DEPOT

Perkins

AMERICAN FUND FOR FRENCH WOUNDED

(COMITÉ AMÉRICAIN POUR LES BLESSÉS FRANÇAIS)

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ALCAZAR D'ÉTÉ, Champs-Élysées

PARIS.....November 1st 191.....

Miss Hamilton,

501 Grand Avenue,

St. Paul, Minnesota.

My Dear Miss Hamilton:-

It is with real pleasure that I write to thank you for your
letter, recently received. I know that you, and the
the "circle", are perfectly familiar with the work being done
here, and by the American women, but perhaps you would like me
to tell you that one of our workers overheard a conversation
this morning between a gentleman, who afterwards was pointed out
to her as the head of several hospitals, and a passing friend
when he said "It is perfectly marvelous the number and quality
of supplies that come to us through the American Fund for French
Wounded." It is because the American women have done such
wonderful things in the past that we are encouraged to remind
them of what the coming cold months are going to mean to the
soldiers who are just beginning to get about, and particularly
the soldiers who are taking treatment for tuberculosis. They
need all kinds of warm clothing,- sweaters, pajamas, undercloth-
ing and socks. Owing to recent invasions, and the additional

call for supplies, we are unable to furnish anything like the blankets needed. I wish I could make a personal appeal to every woman in St. Paul right now and beg her to keep in mind the great number of wounded and sick and their needs against the coming cold.

Again I want to thank you.

Most sincerely,

Elijah Perkins see

Dictated to - *Laura C. Forest*

A.... November 27th. 1917.

American Fund for French Wounded
Alcazar d'Eté, Avenue Gabriel,
Paris.

Mesdames:-

Today has been a very happy one, in spite of fatigue, for we tried a new experiment with great success and made I don't know how many men very happy.

You know when we have a big evacuation into the interior, the men sometimes spend an entire day waiting à la gare for the train that is to carry them on. You can imagine that it isn't exactly gay lying in the baraquas or hanging around outside with nothing to do, nothing for amusement and everyone with the cafard at leaving their hospitals and going no one knows where! It struck us that there the gramophone would find a cordial reception and when I was sent to our hospital to collect the men who were leaving, I seized the machine and some disks and packed them in with my couchés. You should have heard the murmur of joy that greeted that blessed box! Face brightened all the walking cases collected, the médecin chef arrived and soon we had the men whistling and singing. I had to leave to fetch my other wounded and get some breakfast You see we began at five for this first train, coming again at ten for a second.

I don't know how many hours that machine did duty, but the médecin chef came himself to thank me, saying what a wonderful thing it had been and begging me to loan it each time there is to be an evacuation.

From 11 to 12. 30, we made a regular fête of it. I had taken two boxes of your cigarettes, which I passed all around, lighting them myself, for the men on the brancards; the little attention seemed to give them especial pleasure. Miss Hamilton had her two little mamosettes, which are an open sesame to the men's hearts, and we had a really happy little fête of it. I had taken down several hundred cushions the day before, bought some hooks and Miss Cullis and I had a lot of bright cushions hanging all along the walls behind the stretchers ready to hand when needed. I am also to keep a lot of extra ones there to give to the men leaving who are couchés or have bad arms or knees. It was rather amusing that our fête happened on a day when the inspector arrived. He found a very gay and contented crowd of men. This morning, I had to go down the first thing to collect the gramophone, as I found hospital mourning it.

Yesterday, four of my comrades - Houilli, the mechanician, Eugène, of the essence depot, the brigadier and Cailloux, a driver - gave up their Sunday afternoon -- it's the third time -- to help me unpack some of our 70 cases. I took pictures of them

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unloading before our door so that you might see my present aids. They are real trumps and as eager and interested as they can be. They can do nothing but talk about the thought and kindness, the "gout", as they express it, shown in every little detail by the workers in America. They love the little surprises tucked in the pockets of the garments, the pretty cretons, the thoughtful little touches in everything. Today it was the turn of two officers blessés from our hospital who came to make me a call and stayed to help sort out some sacs de surprises.

I must finish this later, as I am very sleepy. I began service day before yesterday, rouler'd from 2 A.M. until 8 P.M. and this A.M. began at 5, had evacuations until 12. 30 and the men helping me unpack from 2 until 5. I think I need a bath and a bed!

Tuesday.

I'm on duty waiting for the refugees to be announced. We are invited out next Sunday to give a concert and some of our supplies to C..., which I visited last week. The lieutenant here gave me leave to take my car and M. B.. and I started off on our 30 kilometre ride with 500 sacs de surprises, some pyjamas, chandails, caleçons, chemises, face cloths and, happily, a box of your cigarettes and tobacco. I understood that there were about 150 blessés, and you can imagine my feelings when I arrived and was told that there were 900! It is a baraque hospital, built originally just back of the battle line, under the abri of a hill. There is a railroad that passes its doors - and that is about all that does pass now. The armies have moved on, there is no town or village or even a house near, but there is plenty of mud and quiet.

Wednesday (interrupted by refugees and a boche officer prisoner)

I really was amazed to find such a big hospital lost in that dismal country and when I saw what a commotion our arrival was creating, I decided to make lotteries again and we chose the five salles of grands blessés and malades. I made a pile in each baraque of 8 sacs, 2 mufflers, 2 caps, 2 gilets, 2 pyjamas, 2 surgical shirts and several petits coussins and they drew for them. Thanks to your tobacco and cigarettes, I was able to comfort the unlucky. I made a list of things which I am sending you as it would deplete my stores too much to try to supply from here.

(s) Clara G. Perry.

TO THE CIVILIAN COMMITTEE OF THE AMERICAN FUND FOR FRENCH WOUNDED

"Halt!" The sentry raised his rifle horizontally above his head. Our breaks came suddenly down, and we slewed in the icy mud. Our American Ambulance driver in uniform was a familiar sight, our American car with the Red Cross always a welcome one, but we two women were so unusual a vision in these devastated regions that our permits must be looked at thoroughly to make sure we were authorized to pass over these forbidden roads. However, the blue papers with our pictures and the signature of the highest military authority, gave us permission to circulate with the motor in this department of France for three months.

My French friend had come for her French relief society, and I had come to visit and report on the possibilities of an American society being able to enter the field of reconstruction for the devastated households.

"You must not take that road to the left", forbade the sentry, "you must go to the right".

We remonstrated. The road to the right had been under bombardment the day before, and we had no leanings that way. The road to the left led to a ruined town we wished to visit. The sentry insisted; so did we. We pointed to our papers that permitted us "to circulate any where in the department". There was no disputing the authority of the "Grand Quartier".

With a shrug of the shoulders the sentry let us pass, but he leaned confidentially into the motor: "Promise you will never tell what you see on this road to the left". We promised and went our way.

So easy is it to disobey, in ignorance of the importance of military affairs, that three miles from where we left our sentry, and many miles from any habitation, I exclaimed: "Look at the mushroom city scattered over the fields!" and our ambulance man with angry impatience exclaimed: "Hush, that is what you are not to speak of".

Several weeks have passed since then, and the mushroom city has moved to another point, so I may disobey the sentry further and explain that the mystery of this road was the Aviation base, which we were passing. From here, back of the firing line, rose the winged battle ships of the air, the eyes of the army, the bravest fighters in France. Could the enemy but locate this base, their long range guns would plow the hangars and the aeroplanes into such splinters that no trace could be found of man nor weapon.

Another five miles and we found what had already been ploughed by German shell and shrapnel. It was once a town, it was now a heap of stones. Inhabited three years ago by prosperous peasants, the Germans had bombarded and possessed the town, and most of the women and children had fled. Later, bombarded by the French the Germans had fled. Between the two bombardments there was little left in the way of structure, there was little left in the way of life, but that little must be cared for, and that was why we had permits to intrude. Between shell-riddled walls, and leaking roofs, with mudsmeared tiles upheaved by frost, these wrecks of humanity crouched amidst the wrecks of buildings.

A woman with pinched face and haunted eyes stood in the shattered doorway of a crumbling house. No expression passed her countenance, no welcome lit her eyes as we stopped and gave her greeting. She had seen too many come and go in the last thirty months to wonder or to care whence

we came, or why. But the sound of our motor had attracted two children from within, a boy of five and a baby of two, who stumbled over the fallen stones and with the curiosity and timidity of childhood clung for safety to the tattered skirt of their mother. Their great hollow eyes had an imploring look, albeit frightened like a deer's.

My French friend talked to the mother and I extracted a bit of chocolate from my pocket to coax the children. They would not come to me. The chocolate meant nothing to them. I broke off a piece and put it in my mouth. Instantly the eldest child fell upon me like a fury. He clawed my hands, and put his grimy little fingers on my lips. I drew away. I did not understand. The woman's eyes looked more hunted than ever, and in a feeble voice of protest she said:

"Pierre, Pierre, doucement, mon petit"; but Pierre had forced my willing hand open and had fallen on the stick of chocolate as a starving dog falls on a bone.

The smaller child began to cry. The mother stooped to Pierre whose mouth was full, and pathetically tried to reprimand him. "Pardon Madame", she murmured, "he has eaten only rice and water and war bread for seventeen months, and his stomach no longer accepts it. Forgive my little boy his greed".

With a clutch at my heart, and at my throat I searched in the motor for biscuits and any scraps of our picnic lunch. With the little food I found I entered uninvited her crumbling home. She followed with the screaming baby and Pierre, choling over chocolate too quickly swallowed. It was evident another baby would soon be numbered in the household. It was dark inside. The window glass was gone, and the draughty hole filled with straw and dirty rags. A board was placed across two barrels and served as a table. A bed built into the wall seemed intact, but no sheets were there and no pillows.

I placed my poor provisions on the improvised table, the woman looking dull on, the baby pitifully crying. The woman made no move to take the food and I asked might the baby have a sweet biscuit? while Pierre seeing further chance of eating tried to reach the biscuit box.

"For me, for us"? she queried.

"Of course", I answered.

She gave a biscuit to her baby and slumped onto a bench. The tears rained down her face. Pierre had both hands full. The baby had quieted and with tiny fingers like a bird's claws he clutched at the dry cookie in his mother's hand. The drawn skin on the little one's face, the hollow temples, the huge eyes, told its own story of months of starvation.

Little by little I got the woman's story. Her husband of course had gone to the war, she knew not where; the baby on her arm was born during the German entrance so that she could not flee with the other refugees. Subsequently her life was within the German lines. She scrubbed, she washed, she cleaned their boots, she slaved all day and she was fed enough to keep her alive. But her children got no rations but a portion of her own, and scurvy had lately become an added curse. And now another baby was due.

What preparation was there for the child? None!

Had she bedding and clothes and blankets? None!

The dirty rags in the window holes she could wash and use.

Would anyone come and care for her in her sickness? Yes, probably a neighbor down the street.

I had seen enough that day to know there was work for all the societies America could organize, to rebuild the shattered lives and the scattered homes of 125,000 women and children in that part of France.

My French friend (whose society gave out linen to the most desperate cases) promised a pair of sheets and six towels. It was all the Society could afford to give. They had so little and it had to go so far.

I promised everything I could think of, for I knew I had my splendid country back of me, and I had but to ask for help in the reconstruction division of the American Fund for French Wounded, and I would get from generous workers all that was needed for this woman and for other women, and food and clothing for all their babies.

ELIZABETH PERKINS.

Program of
LECTURES
and
ENTERTAINMENTS

Offered to the Committees
of American Fund for
French Wounded



MISS RUTH DRAPER, the well-known Monologist, has offered her services free of all charge during the month of February to any committee of the American Fund for French Wounded that will get together an audience and sell tickets for not less than \$1.50 (and preferably more). Miss Draper will give a full programme of her recitations and all money raised may be kept for the benefit of the committee presenting her, except ten percent which Headquarters will need to pay the overhead charges of postage, publicity, etc.

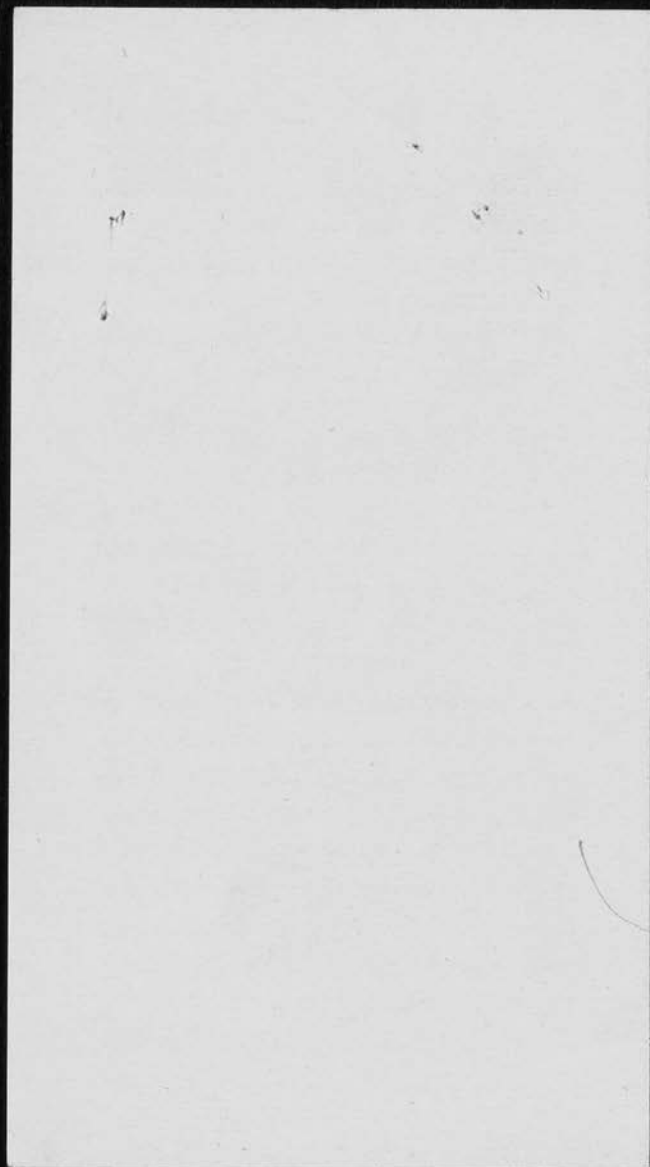
Motion pictures taken by order of the French Government representing the work of the Civilian Committee of the American Fund in devastated France can be sent with or without a lecturer to any Committee. The proceeds from these pictures shall be divided on a fifty percent basis between the Committee and Headquarters.

The pictures show the agricultural work being done in the Aisne, patching of shell-torn houses, the establishing of a dairy, the distribution of supplies to refugees, and the daily life of the ten American women whose efforts have been publicly recognized by the French Government.

On Sunday Evening, February 3rd, at the Harris Theatre, New York, Three War Plays are to be given by members of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts under the auspices of the American Fund for French Wounded.

Any representative of our Committees in New York at that time may have complimentary tickets by applying at the Lecture Bureau, American Fund for French Wounded, 73 Park Ave., and asking for Miss Aldrich. Details concerning routes, dates, programmes, etc., will be furnished by the Lecture Bureau.

ELIZABETH PERKINS
Chairman Publicity Committee





FOOD
WILL
WIN THE WAR
DON'T WASTE



THIS SIDE OF CARD IS FOR ADDRESS

Mrs. C. M. Ames Chapman
St Pauls Minn

501 Grand Ave.

The American Fund
for French Wounded
includes & thank you for
your donation received
by letter March 15--

Yours truly

Elizabeth Perkins

cc: ss

March 18

National Headquarters

American Fund for French Wounded

(RECOGNIZED AND APPROVED BY THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT)

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Jan. 10, 1918.

My dear Mrs. Perkins -

The American Fund for French Wounded and the Red Cross are now in active co-operation.

The French wounded in all fighting countries still look to us for supplies.

The French military authorities ask our assistance in civilian work, and we have a large area in the Aisne and the Somme to rehabilitate in co-operation with the Red Cross.

The Red Cross call upon us for emergency work in France of many kinds.

It is our aim to do our utmost to help our Allies and to relieve the Red Cross in so far as we are able.

National Headquarters realize the difficulty in raising funds and stimulating interest in the public, and therefore enclose a programme of lectures and entertainments which are endorsed by us and are procurable by all our committees.

A special bureau has been opened to efficiently handle this propaganda and all applicants for information will please address communications: Lecture Bureau, American Fund for French Wounded, 73 Park Avenue, New York City, Attention of Miss Mary Aldrich.

An early response to these suggestions will greatly facilitate the arrangements of routes and dates and reduce the expense of overhead charges.

Yours very truly,

Elizabeth Perkins

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