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Letter from Ceylon Kingston to his mother, dated March 7, 1919

Ceylon S. Kingston

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My dear Mother:

Returned from Nancy Saturday night and found your letter that had been mailed Feb. 6 here waiting for me. It had been just three weeks coming which is pretty good time as things go now.

I guess Betty must act better in school because I see her deportment is marked A. When I was at the old house of Joanne d' Arc I bought a little pin which I will give. Her. John wants relics. Well at Nancy the other day I got a German iron cross from an American soldier and if John will go to the dentist and tell him that he does not want to be forgotten I will decorate him with the iron cross when I return.

Last Friday morning I got up at 3 and walked to Mirecour and took the 5 o'clock train to Epinal where I changed and took the train to St. Die. I have long been interested in St. Die because Martin Waldseemuller lived there. It was he that first proposed the name America and the old building still in an excellent condition where the printing press was located is there. I had no authority to go up there and we Americans are not supposed to run around without authorization. But there are no Americans (A.P.M. and M.P.) up there and the French do not care in the least. I am getting accustomed to travelling around in these funny trains and I feel quite at home now. They certainly have strange ways of running their trains. They do not take up the tickets and it is up to you to get out at the station where your journey ends. The French system appears to suppose that everybody is both honest and intelligent. It would never work in the U.S.A. I am enclosing a R.R. ticket. They sell the tickets at very low rates to military people — everybody in any kind of a uniform — about $\frac{1}{2}$ cent a mile — and if you don't buy a ticket it is all the same. I am sufficiently honest to buy tickets.

I stayed Friday night at the Red Cross Hotel for officers at Nancy and looked at the city after attending to my errands. Nancy shows many marks of the war. It was shelled by the cannon in 1914-15 and afterwards bombed quite constantly by the German airplanes. I enclose a characteristic picture. There are a good many Americans passing through Nancy all the time.

At St. Die there happened to be near the station while I was waiting for the train an auction of horses and donkeys by the army. The army had no further use for them. The horses were cast offs and sold at various prices — 300 to 800 francs. They were not much good. A real good horse is worth 2500 francs here. Under these circumstances I don't think the Americans will take any horses home. The donkeys sold at 150-250 francs. They are little fellows but stout. For the war they were used to carry ammunition and supplies up to the front lines. They did not mind shell fire as did the horses. The donkeys were good little soldiers, so the French say. They are not much bigger than a Newfoundland dog.

We had an auction here the other day and a cow sold for 1200 francs — just a good ordinary cow!

I have put in my application for release but have not heard from it yet.

There is a peculiar thing that has occurred lately: the French government is allowing our young soldiers to volunteer for service in the Polish Army. About 200 have volunteered out of this battalion. They get increased pay and I suppose their enlistment will count on this period of enforced service here. One can draw several conclusions regarding the French attitude toward German, Polish, and Russian affairs from this circumstance.

Love to all,
Ceylon