29 FERNDALE DRIVE
HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON, NEW YORK

Hotel Parc-Majestic,
Vichy, Aug 19, 1940.

Dear Margaret,

We have come this far without difficulty, although slowly, and to-morrow we hope to get to Paris. As no mail or telegrams are allowed to enter or leave the occupied zone, you may not hear from us again until I come out in about two weeks on my way to Lisbon.

We are all very fit and optimistic. We have had a good reception everywhere and co-operation is denied, but we have not yet talked with the responsible heads

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officials about the kind of corporation

We flew from Madrid to Barcelona, where our only problem was the absence of taxis to take us and our bags to the railroad station. The very few able to run on their gasoline allowance were always occupied. Finally in desperation we went to the German-controlled ~~airplane~~ airways company, and they allowed the head porter to ~~have~~ use the huge bus that brings people from the airport and take us to the station without charge.

We have not been in a shelter since we reached Europe, and we have spent much time in cities between trains. We spent one night in a tiny

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hotel at Cerbère in Spain on the French border. The place had evidently been used for introducing war-materials, etc, during the Civil War, for it had been heavily bombed and the tiny harbor had a fortified concrete landing under shelter of a hill.

Our first taste of real crowding and confusion was at Toulouse. We arrived at eleven at night and found the station platforms packed with people and their belongings. There were many demobilized soldiers as well as refugees all anxious to get on the first train for home. Many were sleeping on the floor. No taxis were in evidence

and of course the hotels were full, with people sleeping in the common rooms. By great good luck we managed to get one room in an upper floor of the hotel over the station. The elevator was not running. There was one double bed and a large floor. I took the useless bolster and comforter and made myself very comfortable on the floor and slept like a log until the alarm went off at 5:30, so that we could get a train at 6 o'clock. At that place we had to wait twelve hours for the train to St Germain near Vichy. We went early to make sure that we should get a seat on the train. The station was crowded and soldiers were

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sleeping on the floor. We stood on steps and platform for two hours, and then the train arrived full. Nevertheless hundreds of refugees and soldiers pushed their way on with their baggage. We managed to get on also. Dr. O'Brien and I were on the platform and Dr. Strode was near-by in the corridor. Baggage was piled high and people were packed in tight. At several stations additional persons were squeezed in. Some women got on by squeezing into the toilet from the wrong side of the train. The crowd, in spite of the confusion was ~~tired and~~ entirely good-natured. They were going home!

There were children on the train. One little girl was passed from hand to hand to the toilet where the women were. Two or three men attempted to make the same journey. To get them in it was necessary for a couple of the women to crowd out, for the man to get in, for the other women to come out, and for the door to close. Later there was the reverse process. What a comical disturbance for us all!

Thus we rode standing in the dim light until dawn. A soldier had a bottle of thick syrup in his bag and it came open and leaked over much of the luggage including Dr. Studer's suitcase next to me. My hands and everything touched.

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became extremely sticky with no
prospect of washing anything. Sleeping
on the hoof was a fallacy. We kept
~~kept~~ going to sleep leaning on
walls or bags, but everytime one nodded
his knees, one or both, would buckle
and he would fall against his
neighbor and have to apologize
before repeating the performance.
Finally it became light
and we reached St. Germain
where the Vichy train was waiting.
Here we had room to stand without
crowding. At Vichy we managed
to get a ~~taxi~~ taxi and make

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the rounds of the hotels. Of course they were full, but we made reservations in the best and by good luck managed to get two rooms in a third-class hotel with running water in the rooms. The bath rooms had been converted to bed rooms. Nevertheless we cleaned up and spent the morning visiting the Embassy ~~and other offices~~ and seeing people. In the afternoon and the following night we slept. The next day we obtained space in the hotel of first choice, the Parc-Majestic, where the most important government offices are.

We are all wondering how things have gone at home. And what you are hearing from Peggy! My best love to you all,

Wilbur,

P.S. The extra cake of ivory soap is being hoarded like gold, I have divided it between Drs. Shide & O'Brien. They send thanks.

W.