

(This is part of a letter which Joe Berry wrote to his mother less than three weeks before his death.)

December 15, 1944

Dear Mother,

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There are many values here which cannot be construed as other than morbid and tragic and unwholesome in every respect; but there are other values of spirit and manliness and courage, the recollection of which makes a person proud to have come through the whole thing. It is far better for a person to extract those positive values and to try to weigh and evaluate the real and true meanings of the things he sees and the situations in which he finds himself, rather than to allow himself to be too unduly impressed with the external and immediate sordid circumstances which he doesn't need to look carefully for. Of course, that is the way I feel about most everything, as you well know — the power of logic over feeling and the precedence of orderly, reasonable thought over haphazard sensory impressions. I am irrevocably convinced of the might of reason and of the power of the wise man as a moral agent, and I don't think that even this war can change that. It might reveal to me that the specific instance of mental control and development in myself is not so far advanced as I should like, but it can't alter my belief that the truly intelligent person can come through anything without being made bitter and hard and cynical. I hope I can do it — maybe not. The rest of the road which we have yet to travel will show that.

I am not too concerned about my own safety, which I suppose is the greatest matter of worry to you. If I can maintain my own integrity so long as I am here, I don't think it matters much in the larger picture of things what happens on the way. I'm not yet convinced of the honor of war and the nobility of the soldier's profession. I am convinced of the necessity of doing my job as efficiently as possible in order to save the lives of those around me and eventually of those back home. Well, enough for now — I have much to do, as usual. It's been snowing here for a day or so and the country looks awfully pretty. I think, sometimes, if the German people had gone to their windows and looked out at the snow covered pines once in a while, we might not have had to come over here. I have never seen such beautiful scenery, even back home.

All my love,

Joe.