Letter, 1919 May 25, Fred F. Marshall to Dear little friend [Berthe Eller]

Fred F. Marshall

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Dear little friend--

What's the matter, are you still having winter over in little old New York -- it's a cinch your last letter seemed to be fringed all around with a fine lot of icicles. Perhaps you are wearied of writing me with such consistency, and again, maybe it is all my imagination. I hope so, at least.

Topsy--this country is perfectly delightful now. I wish you could see it. Such green, such skies, such air, I can't attempt to describe it. When you enter a woods here it is like entering a dark subterranean passage. The foliage is so luxuriant and the huge knarled trees so thick and squatty that little sun can find its way thru. To walk thru one of these places is a treat. The ground, of course, is sandy or a mixture of sand and plant mulch that sinks beneath your feet and reminds one of treading on an old damp saw-dust pile. There are beautiful flowers everywhere and I have found many of my old favorites including the anemone, the bellwort and several other of the crowfoot family. It is also a common sight to see the pastures tinted with patches of yellow dandylions and the Holland"kinder" take especial delight in weaving the long chains from the stems--you remember. The children over here are remarkably pretty; chubby, pink of cheeks and waving blond or brown hair. Somehow they seem to be a bit more care-free than our children and are always running about thru the country or about the shaded village streets as happy as the birds that dart and flit above them. I am just beginning to realize what it must have meant to Belgium and France when those heathenish hords swept down into just such a beautiful land as this is now and made of it a waste of charred ruins and blood stained woods. As for me I am in favor of stripping Germany to her very last resource. She can never pay too much--never enough.

Yesterday we had a big time in The Hague. Some six thousand or more of Zeelanderse and Limburgers came here to pay homage to the Queen and the little princess Wilhemina. It was one gay festival of singing and parading with brass bands. From the upstairs window I viewed the parade of queerly dressed natives of the two provinces marching up the Lange Voorhaute that leads to the palace of the Queen mother. It was quite a spectacle and the singing was wonderful.
because it came up to us like drifting thru a huge megalomane formed naturally by the rows of trees that border the drive and cover it over with a net work of leaves. The women wore their provincial costume - the flaring white cap, the padded skirts, the huge ear rings and arms bare well above the elbow. During the procession the royal family appeared on the balcony, also dressed in the Zeeland costume.

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Oh-you must not play truant so often. It isn't so long now until vacation is it. What do intend doing this vacation season. "Us fellows" used to figure for months ahead of the wonderful camping trips we were going to enjoy and of the circus we were going to see and of the hermit houses we were going to build in the woods down in the creek ravine. Somehow it seemed we never had the time to get everything done but when it came time for school to take up again along in the dry sere first days of September we all felt an unnatural desire to get back to school again and what matter if our calloused stubbed feet did cramp in those darned good for nuthin' shoes, or what matter if the hanged old collar button did punch a hole in the fellers neck, there was the old crowd again and the teacher a bit more smiling than usual greeting you with a hearty - Why, how-do you do Fred" just as if she had forgotten all about those papers. And if you banged against her ear last spring and Oh Gee! who was the pretty little new girl with the red ribbon and the thousand of jet black curls. Of course, that is a Methodist minister's niece. Her name is Berthe, and she is from New York. Whew! haint she some curty though. I hope the teacher sits next to me. ......... I wake up here.

Before I go any further I am going to ask you to excuse me using this typewriter. I still have a stiff finger, you know and as it is the second one on my left hand and as I only use the first one on my right with an occasional peck with the first one on my left you can readily see why I resorted to the use of it. neat war.