

Cassidy Cameron, Age 15
Blenheim District High School
Blenheim, Ontario

Dear Mother,

I hope by writing this letter you can begin to understand that even though my reasons for leaving were not parallel to your own, I feel I have made the right choice for myself.

First and foremost I hope that all of our relatives are alive and well. Please pass on my greetings to them all. If they are not well, please respond to this letter and tell me any news you have. How are the twins behaving? How is life on the farm? Is father still complaining about the groundhogs ruining his garden? Oh, I miss all of you so much. Surely you know that I would return home immediately if my pride for my country was anything less than it is. The need for workers has grown immensely now that the recruiters have come and gone from our town and the communities surrounding it. Before I left John was considering whether or not to go and join his cousins in the war; has he? I pray my leaving has not affected his decision in any way. If he is still with you, please pass along my love and kindness to him.

Four days ago, I arrived in Toronto at the train station, to find Aunt Martha waiting for me as she said she would be. Her smile was truly comforting and put all my worries to rest. She helped me with what luggage I had and led me to the wagon where her husband was waiting for us. The sights here are more different than anything I had ever imagined. There are so many people, tall buildings everywhere, streetcars, and stores of all kinds lining the streets; I'm not sure how these people can survive here - the stench of the streets is intolerable. I miss home.

That afternoon Aunt Martha gave me a tour of the city and showed me to the factory where we were to work the following day. It was a bit larger than any of the surrounding buildings, made of brick but had no obvious distinctions, nor signs of any kind as to give the slightest hint of what it was or what was inside it. It was located in a smaller part of the city, and for a reason unknown to me, smelled more horrible around that spot than any place I have ever been. I went to bed that night quite exhausted, yet excited, wondering what my first day in a factory would be like.

Martha woke me the following morning, what the time was I do not know other than the fact that it was not yet light. I got up and found a neatly folded uniform at my bedside table. Quickly, I got dressed and went to the kitchen where I was surprised to see both Uncle Tom and Aunt Martha already eating. I sat down at the table and thankfully welcomed the 2 eggs and a small pile of toast, which he put on my plate.

That afternoon, after working for 6 hours in the factory, my first of many regrets began to surface: I had neither eaten enough breakfast, nor packed enough lunch. But the food alone was not the worst of it. It was poorly lit, smelled worse inside the building than it did outside, and was incredibly grimy and dirty. Only then did I realize the need to wear the one-piece, long-sleeved, dark blue uniforms. There were about 50-75 workers in that building. While working I overheard from one of the workers saying that the factory had been recently modified to manufacture large shells and bullets or bombs, for our soldiers across the ocean. At the end of that day, I went home tired, covered with muck that wouldn't easily come off, hungry, my hands and eyes sore and stinging, and craving some of Laura's fresh rolls. Surely if I had known the whereabouts and conditions of this factory I might have let you and Emma talk me out of wasting my time in this dump.

This routine continued for the next 2 days - get up, get dressed, eat, walk to work, settle into the mundane mold of an assembly line worker for 5 hours, have a short break which that miserable boss and employer calls our lunch. Then we go back to work for another 6 hours before finally saying good-bye to the factory at 5:00 in the afternoon. The only positive aspects of the job are the other women I work with, the money earned (although not very much), and the satisfaction felt for aiding my country in its time of need.

Yesterday, Praise God, was Sunday and I went to church. Uncle Tom and Aunt Martha did not accompany me for reasons that were irrelevant and filled with stupidity. The service was pleasant, but the building itself was amazing. If you ever decide to visit me I will be sure to show you this magnificent building.

As I am writing this letter to you, I am wondering if the price of being a worker here in Toronto is worth the things I have left behind. I think I am getting homesick. At home I somehow feel more alive, the air is fresher, the people are somehow friendlier, it is cleaner and even the filthy areas are cleaner than Toronto. I think I have had enough of this new life, I know I have only been here a short while, but it seems like much more. I have made up my mind. The only reason for which I stay here is to be a part of the war effort and even that is almost unbearable, and an embarrassment to our country. Yes, in two weeks time I shall return home. In the meantime I shall miss you all terribly and will be counting the days until my departure.

With all my love,

Susan Ferguson