YOUNG SOLDIER HEARTS OF FRANCE

"Whene'er a noble deed is wrought;
Whene'er is spoke a noble thought;
Our thoughts in glad surprise
To higher levels rise."

Young Soldier Hearts of France

A Wreath of Immortelles

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To our returned soldiers and to all young Canadians, these glimpses of young French patriotism are specially inscribed.

INTRODUCTION

These translations from two remarkable series of consecutive letters from two young soldiers of France to their respective family circles, are published in Canada with the kind permission of the parties concerned—the originals having been published in France, in separate monographs. In publishing together the two series—so varied in character and experience, yet one in spirit—some portions of the original monographs have been omitted in order to keep the book within more convenient limits—its main purpose being to convey to the reader some adequate impression of the pure patriotism, and warm and vital faith which inspired these young soldiers, so different in some respects, to fight and die, for home, for France, for the rights of humanity, and the peace of the world.

Titles of the French originals.

"Un soldat sans peur et sans reproche."
Paris, Fischbacker, Editeur.
Paris, 33 Rue de Seine.

Alfred Eugene Casalis: Lettres d'un jeune soldat
de France and de Jesus-Christ.
48 Rue de Lille, Paris.

Any profits from this publication, over and above publishing expenses, will be divided between the restoration of the desolated home-church of Cornet-Auquier at Nauroy, in Picardy, and the Paris Evangelical Mission in Basutoland, to which Alfred Casalis had from childhood devoted his future life.

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ANDRE CORNET-AUQUIER

WHAT we may be allowed to call the "New (French) Renaissance," which has developed since the outbreak of the late tragic world-war, has been one of its happy surprises. For France seemed to have fallen back somewhat from her former high place among the nations. She had passed through shocks and reverses enough to try the staying power and spirit of any people. After Sedan, when the military *prestige*—which, it has been said, was at its meridian during the short-lived domination of Napoleon Bonaparte—seemed to have failed her utterly; defeated and humiliated by Prussian militarism, wounded to the quick by the loss of Alsace and Lorraine, and weakened by contending factions, she had only slowly struggled back to a measure of her former prosperity. Moreover, the

chivalrous France of early Christian centuries—the cradle of primitive faith and culture, of Philip the Crusader, St. Louis and Anuelm, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Fénélon, —had suffered an eclipse of faith, which seemed to have developed into a pronounced scepticism. The spirit which had raised and decorated her ancient cathedrals seemed to have passed away; and by many people in Britain, at any rate, the nation was deemed shallow and frivolous; and even its art seemed to have degenerated into a growing love of sensation and novelty.

But things are not always what they seem; and in France, as in other lands, there has always been a "saving remnant." A warmer and more vital faith had grown up under the shadow of its old, historic Church, which largely counteracted its tendency towards scepticism. A generation of young men was growing up, learning—at its schools, lyceums and universities—larger thoughts and ideals than had in many cases been those of their fathers. And when, after

years of occasional aggression and insults, Germany at last dropped all disguise, and stretched forth her "mailed hand" to grasp at the liberties of her neighbours and the world, the gallant flower of this new young France sprang to the defence of their own fair fields and of human liberty. In giving way to the noble impulses of patriotism which moved them, they "builded better than they knew"; for there is no doubt that the world owes much to the young warriors who, by their dash and devotion, turned back the overwhelming Teuton menace from the road to Paris, and—thereafter—to the English Channel!

Now that some of the letters recording their thoughts and experiences, for the benefit of the homes they had left, have been collected and published, we can learn much, at first hand, of their thoughts and ideals, and their heroic sacrifices for the cause they deemed that of God and humanity. In the opinion of the editor and translator of these selections from deeply interesting records, it

is well that they should be within the reach of our own young people, many of whom may not be able to read them freely in the original French, or may not have had access to the originals; and with this end in view these selections have been prepared.

In the group of young soldier-heroes with whom we may thus become personally acquainted, we naturally turn to one of the older ones—himself only twenty-eight when he fell,—who, in his brief career, gained the well merited and high distinction of the Legion of Honour. On the title-page of the original collection of his letters, we read this legend, "*'Un soldat sans peur et sans reproche,'* who was captain of the 133rd Regiment of Infantry, Chevalier of the Legion of Honour; decorated with the *Croix-de-Guerre;* and who died for France at the age of twenty-eight years." We are also told that his letters are dedicated "to the youths of France, to serve as an example."

In reading the letters and the memorial sketch, we are not inclined to think this

tribute too high; for in André Cornet-Auquier we cannot but recognize a worthy impersonation of Chaucer's "very perfect, gentle knight," who, "from his first beginning, loved chivalry, truth and honour, freedom and courtesy." From his childhood he seems to have possessed singularly noble and attractive qualities, which were carefully nurtured in the home of his father—a French Protestant pastor,—warmed by strong domestic affection, and vitalized by a fervent and enlightened Christian faith. Knowing this, we are not surprised to hear of his early sense of duty, devotion to work, and profound respect for his masters and superiors, which did much to smooth his way in his military life. At school, he was a favourite with his masters, through his studious zeal; and with his young companions, through his naturally gladsome nature, his merry songs and joyous laugh; while they respected, none the less, his conscientious life and high principles. When leaving the Lyceum of Lyons, to which he went from

his earliest school at Chalons sur Saône—his childhood's home—the Superintendent rendered to him this high tribute: "Never will this lad be replaced at the Lyceum, for the moral influence he exerted on his fellow-pupils." During his years at the Lyceum, our young knight, pure in heart, and chivalrous in impulse, did not escape the pressure of the problems strongly agitating modern society, and especially his native land; and was somewhat in danger of being captivated by the illusory dreams of "Pacifists" and Socialists, and to cherish vague ideals of universal fraternity and peace, which appealed strongly to his generous nature. But at the University of Dijon, he was led, by a judicious friend, who was also his military chief, to seek a firmer foundation for his faith in the future of humanity.

A lover of the beautiful in Nature, of music, of art, of literature, including that noblest of all,—the Holy Scriptures—and gifted with a charming vivacity and courtesy of manner, he was always welcome in any

company; and we are told on the authority of his example, that "one can be a bright and merry companion, and at the same time, a thoroughly moral and Christian man." His earnest faith did not usually express itself in many words, though he never hesitated, when occasion arose, to confess boldly that it was the light and strength of his own happy life; and while he esteemed prayer to be a "permanent condition of the soul, rather than an isolated act," it was his daily endeavour to "show his faith by his works"—by doing his best, in all circumstances—to "do justly, to love mercy," and "keep himself unspotted from the world." The head of the Scottish University in which he was a professor at the outbreak of the war, pronounced his life "without stain, and without reproach; an example of duty and integrity —of purity, of true piety." How he fulfilled his duties as an officer, his letters incidentally reveal, and, with his high ideals of conscience, ardent energy and largeness of spirit, and his keenness of intelligence, he

won the sincere respect of his men—the "*Compagnie d'élite,*" which he moulded by his influence, and so attracted them to himself by his unceasing devotion, that when, to their dismay, he was suddenly taken from them, "they wept, like bewildered children, around his bier."

For—ideal knight as he was—his connection with his men seemed that of an ideal officer, in his constant thought and care for their welfare—to keep them in health and good spirits; to nerve them in the face of depression and danger; to cheer them at all times to do their best. This is touchingly expressed in the heart-felt testimony of a sergeant:

"He never told us that he loved us, but his affection for us manifested itself in all his actions, and we returned it fully. We loved him with that affection—chiefly produced by esteem and confidence—which soldiers bear to the best of their chiefs,—for his genuine goodness; for his highly conscientious fulfilment of his duty as an officer;

for his ardent energy, his breadth of spirit, and his wonderful intelligence! We had hoped that, under his orders, we should go to final Victory, justifying, to that end, the reputation of the *Compagnie d'élite* which he had enabled us to attain. We cannot reconcile ourselves to the thought that we shall never see him again,—so fully alive, so full of promise!"

The same chivalrous spirit showed itself in his ordinary intercourse, especially with the suffering and helpless—whether in befriending a distressed and friendless maiden, or a couple of starving orphan kittens! It shows itself in all his letters to his "dear ones" at home, especially towards the beloved "little mother," in whose suffering for him he himself seemed to share, and who survived his death only a few months. From the first, he had had a presentiment that he would not survive the war, communicated only to confidential friends; and it was probably in order to soften the shock when it should come, that he pleaded so earnestly

that his parents should "make in advance the sacrifice of his life" and accustom themselves to think of it as *made!*

It is no marvel that, after such a life of willing sacrifice, of faith, hope and love, he should accept death with child-like trust, as "the will of God," leading to the Life Eternal!

Consecutive Letters of Captain Andre Cornet-Auquier to Members of His Family

Colwyn Bay. August 3, 1914. My dear ones.—After the last news—*it is WAR!* I learned this yesterday afternoon, at the B——'s. Every one turned pale. At family worship we sang "Abide with us, O Lord" —beautiful words! Mr. B—— prayed for me and for my mother, that God would sustain us in this trial—knowing what we are to each other! I feel—and I am—quite calm. God is there; do not fear! And then—I have the military soul! You may tell the English uncles that I am proud to fight, not only for France, but also for England—that dear second country; and if I must die for these two countries, I shall die happy, provided it is *in victory!* I am a French soldier. I shall be in Paris to-morrow.

CHALONS-SUR-SAONE. AUGUST 5. Say to the English uncles that I shall fight like a Frenchman, and die like an Englishman. Our watchword is the signal of Nelson—The country expects every man to do his duty. *Vive la France* and England!

BELLEY. AUGUST 6. You can imagine the frenzied enthusiasm of the troops! An English officer whom I met at the Ambérieu Station could not get over it. I am entirely replunged into the military spirit. I am a soldier at heart!

BELLEY. AUGUST 15. I shall be second officer for the week, in charge of police duty. Having the power,—those villains shall feel it, who entice our men into their establishments by the back door, to make them drunk! There are many of us here burning to set out for the front. I have come, full of zeal and ardour, to fight; *now* we spend the time in idleness, doing nothing, *in ennui,* —while others hunt up the quarry. So—at the first call for volunteers—I am off!

AUGUST 23. My dear ones:—I am on the

field. A first stage of twenty-five kilometres* very well borne. Cordial reception by the Colonel. I have found many of my old friends. I lose my friend Girard; but as he is in a neighbouring battalion, we shall meet often. It seems strange to hear German spoken around us, but we feel quite in France, nevertheless. I saw, at Belfort, twenty-four cannon taken from the Germans;—have met many convoys of prisoners. It was curious to see them laugh and joke when we met them on the way. They consider us as comrades, once the game is over. The captain, whom I saw last at Belley, cried like a child at not being able to come with us!

ALSACE. AUGUST 25. What a reception! "You are our saviours," they said to us this morning. They give the toast, *"Vive l' Alsace Française!* They take care of us; they fondle us. But it is not too much; for we have hardships. Everything has to be done

*Strictly speaking—a *kilometre*—5/8 of a mile; a *metre*—a little over two feet (2.27).

at night, on account of air scouting: in five days I have slept less than fifteen hours. We are weary, but have abundant food. My German serves me well; but the people here are proud of speaking French. The *morale* is good.

August 27. The sentiments of the population vary much. In some places they are less French than in others.

September 4. "Baptism of fire!" Oh, the horrors of war! Ravaged villages! How it tries the nerves! May God be with you. I feel Him with me!

September 10. I am writing at some hundred metres from the enemy lines. I have slept at two hundred metres from them! I assure you I opened my eyes—wide! We are worn out. I have been ten days without a wash, and have not had my shoes off for eight! I cannot describe my present complexion! It was from the heavy artillery that I received my "baptism of fire." During three hours we have been lying flat on the ground, while the shells fell all about

us. One exploded scarcely five metres from me, making an enormous hole in the ground. I was covered with earth and *débris*. The most horrible thing is the odour of corpses! The other day my section had to inter thirty —partly decomposed. It is unimaginable. What I have seen of horrors, frightful wounds, and villages in ruins! What brutes are the Germans who burn the farms!

I am quite ready to give my life, and I know you have made the sacrifice of it for France! I am encircled by prayers, and I pray much for you all. I have a good comrade in a priest—like myself a second lieutenant.

A thousand affectionate regards to all. May God guard us all, as He has done hitherto.—Your loving son and brother.

SEPTEMBER 12. Great news! I am in command of a company! I remain with my old rank—that is understood—but I have all the powers, all the rights, and all the responsibility of a captain. It is alarming! When I was told of it, yesterday, I felt really ill—

the life of so many men in my hands! Pray much for me: I need it far more than ever. I feel so young and inexperienced! You cannot form any idea of the horrors of the battlefield. It is not possible to imagine them.

We have, this morning, passed through a village with only one house and church remaining undestroyed. All the rest had been burned—only the four walls left. One must hear the inhabitants recount the sufferings they endured, and see the houses through which these brutes of Germans have passed.

The cannon is thundering: the pursuit of their army in flight is going on. On the hill-top I occupy they have abandoned a large quantity of artillery munitions.

Have you any news from London and Marguerite? I never receive a word from you, nor from England. One single card since I left Belley!

SEPTEMBER 22, 24 AND 27. I have been fifteen days without undressing, washing, or shaving! I write under shell-fire; and I eat and sleep under the same conditions.

It is frightful—the state of mind one acquires on a field of battle! I could never have believed that I could remain indifferent in the presence of corpses. Human life seems for us to have lost its value. Strange to think that we even come to laugh in the midst of all this—like fools! But, when one reflects, it is an extraordinary feeling that takes possession of one—an infinite gravity and melancholy. One lives from day to day: one thinks no more of to-morrow; for will there be any to-morrow? One no longer speaks of the future without saying—"*If* we return." No more plans for the future; everything is stopped, finished, for the time being! What a strange life! It seems that one should like to know the future—what is going to happen. And to think that God knows, and that He has foreseen all this! A friend of mine, a captain, very Catholic and very pious, said, the other day, that before every battle he was wont to pray. His commandant replied that *that* was not the moment for prayer; that he would be better

employed in taking orders. The captain answered: "My Commandant, that does not hinder me from commanding, from taking my orders and fighting; and I feel the stronger for it." And I said, "My Captain, I do as you do, and I also feel the benefit of it!"

My little mother writes to me that she would fain lay my tired head on her heart. And I, too. I am sometimes so weary, especially since I have got this company. To-day is Sunday—ten o'clock in the morning. You are all coming down for worship; and my father will pray for "our soldiers and sailors." Oh! pray much for them. How sad to hear the cannon thundering on Sunday, instead of prayers and songs of praise! I hold you on my heart, my beloved, with most tender regards.

SEPTEMBER 28. It seems that the longer this war lasts, the less grow the chances of escaping from it. But let us trust our Heavenly Father: nothing shall happen without His will. It has been predicted that

this war would be either very short or very long.

October 4. To-day, for the first time since the campaign began, I have taken something which resembles a bath, and made a change of clothes. I have a firm and cool commandant, in whom I have absolute confidence, which is a great thing. He urges me on, and would like to make me a "*chef*," as he has told me.

October 9. I learned yesterday, from the *Journal*, of the death of Captain Valentin. It is heart-rending! Such a charming boy! Oh, *why?* Accursed war! Poor Bolle!—right arm gone. But at least *his* life is spared.

Yesterday, taking advantage of our rest, I invited to luncheon my chief of battalion, and a captain whom I much love. We had a stunning *menu*—sausage, ham, preceded by a delicious *bouillon*, roast beef with a famous sauce, conserve of small peas, fried apples—I wish I could send you some—rissoles, salad, apple-fritters, tart, fruit dessert, white

grapes from Bordeaux, coffee, *chartreuse!* The commandant was overwhelmed. We have received many compliments. The whole was prepared by my cook, a young worker from St. Etienne, assisted, for the occasion, by the mistress of the house where I lodge. We had a large white table-cloth, fresh service of plates for each two courses, etc., and we scarcely recognized ourselves! On the field, it is curious—we eat like clowns,—in general, pretty poorly, during several weeks,—and then one has dainties before him, all at once. It is then one commits follies! I call by that name a repast like that of yesterday. You see this is a return to the limits of the rational! A bed!—but I could not sleep therein. How would you expect one to sleep undressed in a bed, when one is accustomed to sleep booted—a revolver at his side—on the straw! I have received a letter from Uncle Charles. One would think it written by a strategist! The brave old uncle longs to be fighting by my side.

October 17. Here is an authentic anecdote that my father can communicate to *Le Progrés*. We have occupied for ten days the small village of Gemainfaing, which the Germans have freely bombarded during several hours each day, without having wounded a single man in the whole battalion. One fine day, when the bombardment had been much more furious than usual, they succeeded in wounding one man—a German! This is how it was. One shell fell upon the house occupied by the chief of my battalion, cleft the roof, and penetrated the barn, where it exploded on the hay. There were some soldiers there, who were not touched, but who saw, all at once, an unhappy Boche falling from the sky among them, who, since his comrades had abandoned the place, had hidden himself in the hay, starving with hunger. The hapless captive, a reservist, the father of *nine* children, had been driven from his hiding-place by an exploding German shell, which had hit one arm. Tumbling over in the hay, like Cyrano

from the moon, he had fallen, in spite of himself, into the midst of a party of French soldiers! He entreated them not to kill him; and he was conducted to the commandant, who administered to him a cordial, and had him sent to the doctor. This is one of the *pleasant* stories: there are others, too, which occasionally come to enliven our life.

If it were not that I long to embrace you, this would do! Only there is this separation, which threatens to last. Shall we meet again? Not to know, is horrible: nevertheless, it is better so. If it were always possible that God should grant our prayers! That His will should always accord with our dearest wishes! But those who have fallen have also been prayed for. After all, in God's grace we trust!

October 23rd and 25th. The other day I slipped into the enemy trenches and heard the Germans talking among themselves. It was impressive. By the way, while I am writing, I am drinking tea made *à l'anglaise!* It does not equal good Aunt Clara's tea; but it recalls from afar—"Good old England!"

We get the "little parcels for soldiers"—a delightful gift! Each contains a set of warm underwear, handkerchiefs, socks, serviette, tobacco, pencils, and writing-paper. It is made up by the mothers, easy to see! On the parcel, a label—"Offered to one of our brave soldiers of the 133rd Infantry"; and, within, kind words on a card, "Good health, good courage, and *Vive la France!*" *That* brought the tears to my eyes. Some are sent by religious orders; some by other people.

It is very curious—the moral and nervous effect produced on me by the war! I have seen decomposing corpses; others with open eyes that seemed looking at me; I have seen the most frightful wounds, limbs cut off by shells, bathed in pools of blood; I have stepped over corpses—these things did not trouble me; but stirring narratives, patriotic words, a splendid action, an impulse of pity, make me tear my hair and weep!

I am on duty to-night in my trenches—a superb moonlight night. Oh, it will be good to pray for you there! I clasp you to my heart, and recommend you to God.

October 25. Certainly Marguerite has stirred the world of the Press, and I remain ignorant from beginning to end of her heroic exploits! Some details, I beg. Send me, I pray you, a New Testament, with Psalms—the smallest edition possible. All the German soldiers have Prayer-books: there are some for Protestants and some for Catholics. There are morning and evening prayers, in which protection from the "wicked enemy" is implored. *I* am the "wicked enemy" from *their* point of view.

October 28. My dear ones.—I am promoted lieutenant! You recall my stripe of the first class? This one has for me rather less effect. It has lost flavour; and truly I have little time to be impressed by a gold stripe, in such circumstances as these. All the same, I think my news will please you. I have learned the fact through a telephonic despatch from the Colonel, addressed to myself, and received at eight o'clock in the evening, when I was already asleep, rolled up in my blanket. One of my sub-lieutenants

awakes me and hands me the yellow paper that we all know, and I, being disturbed, begin to mutter—"What? *Another* order to move? I am sleepy." But the other, handing to me the sheet, says to me, "My best congratulations, my lieutenant!" I read, "Lieutenant-Colonel Dayet, Commandant of the 133rd, sends his congratulations to Monsieur Cornet-Auquier, promoted lieutenant." My Chief of Battalion and a captain whom I love much had added below, "We add *ours*." Was not all that very graceful?

Colonel Dayet is an able officer, and a chief in whom we have all confidence—calm, cool, and very brave. He knows how to take the trooper, and he knows how to speak to *men*. I have seen him on a day of battle tap the cheek of a man: "Thou art pale, I see; but thou art not afraid?"

NOVEMBER 4. I have had, since I have been in command of my company, an excellent friend. He was adjutant of reserve when I arrived, and he has been named sub-

lieutenant. He is a schoolmaster—very much one—very proper and serious; a young married man, very much in love. He mentions me to his young wife in all his letters; and she is so grateful to me for the little I can do for her husband. We naturally tell each other our little stories. I have read to him the account of the flight of Marguerite from Brussels.

NOVEMBER 14. For *Le Progrés*.—An incident that happened near by.—Our trenches and those of the Boches are at certain points about eighty metres from each other. Now in the woods on a dark night one quickly loses his way. A foot-soldier comes out of the trench at night and loses himself. Hearing men snoring in a trench, he makes his way thither, lies down and goes to sleep. Disturbed by his neighbour, he repulses him; but the other, without ceremony, throws a leg over his body. The foot-soldier impatiently pushes away the leg. Horror! It was *booted!* The French *poilu* had entered a Boche trench! Needless to add that he quickly departed!

NOVEMBER 15. A reinforcement arrived here from Belley, with ten officers, of whom several are captains. All the companies are now commanded by captains, except the one I command. The colonel and the commandant persist in keeping me in command of it. I am pleased with the honour, of which I know the value. I do not, however, rejoice as I should in time of peace: the circumstances are too sad, and this advancement is due only to the death of comrades fallen on the field of Honour. But I rejoice as a man who does what he can, and leaves the result with his God.

How sad I sometimes feel my solitude—from the longing to see you again—feeling my life in suspense, feeling your disquietude and anxieties! There are times when I could wish that I were alone, without a family! I feel that I should be less anxious; that I should feel less concern about the death which we all look in the face every day, without knowing, in the morning, whether we shall lie down at night. And there are hours when I regain confidence. I repeat to

myself the sentence Marguerite wrote to me on a scrap of paper, on my passage to Paris —"Nothing shall happen without the will of God. Thus all shall go well, since it shall be His will; and He shall provide."

It is so difficult to pray as one would wish, on the field! One has so little time to oneself, and is so often disturbed. It has happened to me, when overcome with drowsiness, to fall asleep while praying. On awaking during the night, I went on praying—to help me to go to sleep again! But God understands—does He not? And then, it seems to me, prayer should be a continual condition. He knows well that if I cannot pray with the lips, I pray with the heart all day. He knows my dearest hopes, my most ardent vows; and it may be that, even when unexpressed in words, they rise from my heart to Him, and that it is only because I believe in Him, that I dare to make these vows and indulge these hopes.

There is one thing which it is more easy for me to do, that is, to read my New Testa-

ment. The very small one, that Yvonne and Thèrèse sent me, never leaves me. This morning I was arrested by the verse, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled; neither let it be afraid." That is enough for me. *With* Jesus and *by* Him one feels so well sheltered!

When you receive this letter, I shall—God willing—be in rest a little in the rear. Would it be too long and too difficult a journey for my father to come thither? Only to see and embrace him at a few kilometres away from the Boches! The rendezvous would be at St. Dié.

NOVEMBER 21. I have just been spending a few days with my company, in a little village, where I was acting commandant. I represented the military authority; the mayor was at disposal; I signed the passports for the country-folk; I was a *personage!* I was delightfully lodged, among very pleasant people. There was a young girl of nineteen there, very sweet; and her name was *Thèrèse!* At which I made her laugh, and

her mother too. It is good for one to see again good women, and be a little petted. It is like peace again, or at least an armistice! One can talk again of one's mother, of one's sisters, to people who comprehend. And so I have become young and foolish again!

To-day I have returned hither with my company; and when, from my horse's back, I saw this fine company of two hundred and seventy men, winding along the road, I felt a sentiment of pride new to me. Do you know that I look well on my big horse, in full equipment, sword at my side, camp-blanket behind the saddle; and I keep saying to myself, "If they saw me, how pleased they would be!" "*They*"—that means *you!* And I picture you all, one after another, and I seem to hear your remarks; to see my father, with his eyes shining, a little *moved,* and quite proud in his heart. Ah! my dear old father! And then—my mother, advising me to be prudent with my mount! Poor beast, she is a prisoner—she, too—a captive German mare, and I do not know her name.

The men call her "Boche," but I prefer to call her "Daisy."

I have forgotten to thank the good Lucie for her conserves, with part of which we have already regaled ourselves. Thanks with all my heart, good old friend!

NOVEMBER 26. *Telegram*: If you can risk the journey, address Weick, Library saint Dié.

(Mons. and Madame Cornet-Auquier arrived at Saint Dié on December 1st, after a fatiguing journey of twenty-four hours, and met there, in front of the Weick Library, their beloved son. The joy of the meeting cannot be described, but may be imagined. They spent with him two delightful days in the village of La Voivre, where his battalion was cantonned. He left them on December 4th, an hour before their own departure from the village. His last words on leaving them were: "I feel that God is with me, and that hitherto He has kept me from harm.")

Letter. December 4 (*evening of the same day*). I am quite courageous, but how I

should have loved to have you still longer! I have so much enjoyed your presence. It was so good! We have all enjoyed it; and my officers were quite affected in leaving you. The good big Défert said to Farjat, "I have run away quickly, because I felt that it was too much for me." You remember how tightly he clasped your hand, and departed hurriedly. God is good: I trust you to Him!

DECEMBER 5. How much I have thought of you since you left La Voivre; and how I have hoped that your return trip was comfortably accomplished! Unfortunately, it must have been cold enough at night; and I hope, with all my heart, that my mother has not taken any harm. My cyclist has brought back the cloak that Jaquier had lent her. You have decidedly lived something of the military life, since she has worn somewhat of an officer's uniform!

I can easily imagine your return, and I have some idea of the conversations! How many questions you will have been asked! But perhaps that would have been needless;

for you yourselves would hasten to relate everything!

DECEMBER 9. We have offered a Cross to our dear commandant. We presented it in private, and it was very touching. Jaquier sang *"Brodons des etendards, et préparons des armes."* I recited "After the Battle," but arranged it as a parody. I think I have never seen a commandant so amused. He said, "There are resources in the First Company."

DECEMBER 24. We are now all the time in the mountains, and in our pine forests. We lack comfort, but we are of good stuff, and make the best of everything; and we find means for paying off the trenches with laughing at them—I can tell you that! When we are huddled up in our ignoble hole, Farjat and I, we repeat twenty times a day a phrase which always convulses us with mirth—"If our families could see us!" But we reach an extraordinary degree of hardening; and one might see us, in undress, bathing in the stream—when we have the time for it!

To think that it will be Christmas to-morrow! I distrust the Boches, and I am waiting till midnight for a sign of attack. It is the sort of thing they did in 1870. Yes: "Peace on earth!" But only when the Germans shall be beaten! May God bless and guard you! Our communion in Him unites and brings us together.

DECEMBER 26. Christmas is past! A day like all the others we have spent since our arrival here. Farjat and I have tried hard for a Christmas Wake, but I was expecting that our neighbours opposite might play us a mean trick, and that under the guise of Christmas carols they might send us a prepared raid; so I have made the round of the trenches; and the men have watched, their ears alert, their eyes on their watches, their guns on the parapet. Was that the anniversary of the night of Bethlehem? The Boches, on *their* side, questioned whether we should not attack them; and their patrols rambled all night along the line of our advanced posts; so that there was an almost

uninterrupted fusilade during that Christmas Eve!

But at last it began to be a little recognized as a *fête*. By force of repeating it to ourselves, we ended by believing it; and then we felt sadder and more alone; farther from our own; more removed from the family life and peace; but we also felt ourselves more in communion with our absent ones. I have read the second chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke, and you have certainly read it in church. There have also been the letters, and I have received a pile. Finally, there are abundance of sweets and dainties sent by the ladies of Belley and Bourg.

But I think, all at once, that New Year's Day is not far off, and that there are vows to be made! You know them. Yours and mine most strangely resemble each other, and they are the same since the outbreak of the war: we have expressed them in our secret prayers. May God grant them! I ask for myself only the courage to submit to His will; and if He permits me to be slain by

the enemy, I ask but one thing—death in a victory, at the head of my dear and fine company!

JANUARY 1 AND 6, 1915. How much I should like to see you make in advance the sacrifice of my life! How I should like to be able to say to myself, "*They* at least are *ready;* and if my death be a grief to them, they are resigned—they were so in advance! I also have moments of impatience, when I feel so full of youth and strength, when I reflect on all that I have left behind of work, of hope, of all that future which smiled before me—I could wish that I might have finished it! But—I reflected this morning—what is the life of an individual, compared with the general peace of all the nations of Europe? Nothing! We all know—we who are fighting—that to-day or to-morrow, it may be ours to pass away;—ah, well—to the grace of God! He who holds our destinies in His hands knew well what such or such an emergency would bring forth. If I die, it is because such is His will; and if

such be His will, it is *well*—there is nothing to regret! I shall live or die only by His will! Then trust and be calm. I ask Him, every day, to detach me more and more from the things of this world. Oh!—I know that it is very hard, very difficult—there is the flesh which revolts from the idea of death! However, others have died, who were beloved by their parents, their wives, their children. My poor little mother, thou findest me admirable. Why? Think how privileged I have been until now; think how much others have suffered compared with me! My hour may not be come; perhaps it *will* come. My only prayer is that it may find me ready. I will pray not for myself; but for others—for *you,* above all. Oh! I do make this prayer ardent, fervent, passionate; and I ask of God to make you calm and courageous, whatever happen! I should feel my strength a hundredfold greater if I knew you joyously ready. And then, above all, do not regard me as a *hero,* or a marvel! What have I done that is extraordinary? Nothing.

I have tried to do my duty, like other people, and that is all. How grieved I have been to hear of the death of Captain Braun.* *There* is a death much more sad than mine would be! We are much privileged, for I have neither wife nor children, like F. and D.—; and then we have the certainty of reunion, in case it should please God to separate us for a short time. Finally, as we were saying, with the Commandant Barberot, who has just gone out from me,—what do our lives count when one thinks of the years of peace and happiness to be lived by those who shall come after us, or who shall survive? We work for to-morrow, in order that there may be no more wars, no more bloodshed, no more slain, no more wounded, no more mutilated beings! We, whose mothers shall have wept so much, work in order that other mothers may never know these burning tears;—and truly, when one thinks of the ages during which that peace shall endure, one is ashamed of the moments of rebellion

*His chief military instructor at Dijon, who had been "proud of having formed such a soldier."

of the flesh at certain times against the thought of death. If that should happen to me, I pray only that I may die at the head of my company, and, without being aware of it—by a bullet full in the heart! Oh! above all, not by the internal wound which tortures and kills by a "slow fire." When I hear these wicked gnats whistling by, I say to myself, "Shall I pass between them? If not, where is it going to touch me?" If we come out of this war, how blessed it will be to be able to walk on the roads without having to use hillocks or ditches to hide oneself! Your letters received. My mother's has given me special pleasure, because she tells me that she would encourage me with her voice, if she saw me rushing upon the enemy! *That* is what I like; and I feel more courage since I have read that sentence. *There* is a true French mother!

JANUARY 14. Frightful weather—mud indescribable! This does not help our work; but we meet our bad luck with good heart, and our good spirits do not relax for a

minute. I have told you that I now take my meals with the Commandant Barberot; and I assure you that we laugh a good deal! The Commandant and I are always the two liveliest companions of the band; and my friend Captain Cornier, with whom I lodge, makes the best play on words, with an air of complete unconsciousness! He is an exceedingly fine man, very cool, very conscientious, from whom I learn much.

JANUARY 15 AND 17. To-night an abundant fall of snow. What a grand spectacle! These magnificent pines, laden with snow, were like a fairy dream. Oh, the beautiful underwoods! I have taken some views.

Those who shall come out of this war will be hard, rugged fellows. Could you imagine any one being able to make his toilette out-of-doors in such weather—to live in the mire, the cold, the snow, with feet never dry, and without even sneezing? What magnificent spirit! One feels himself overflowing with life and health! What an appetite for meals! How good it seems to live! And to

think that at any moment one may meet a sharp death from a wicked little bullet! What a charming life—but *what* life!

The den in which I live with my friend, Captain Cornier, is one large subterranean room, not very high in the ceiling, while the entrance, more especially, is low. In one corner a little Godin stove. We warm ourselves with wood, which never fails. A pleasant heat—average 13°. When it rises to 18 we are stifling and open the door wide —the *door*, for there is *no window!* We have light from an old petrol lamp, which tries hard not to smoke. For the corners, we use our electric pocket-lamps. Near the stove—shelves for our possessions, petrol, shoe-polish, wax, brushes; besides food—tea, chocolate, cakes, etc., etc. Our toilet-table —a badly planed board, with a bucket for water-pitcher, and an old salad-bowl as a basin; two chairs, and a tabouret, made of three ends of wood and a piece of board nailed upon them. It is there I seat myself when we receive the Commandant; for he

comes every second day to take tea with us —a "five o'clock"! On other days we have our regular tea, at the end of our return from work. Finally, at the lower end of the room, our delightful twin beds! If one falls out in the night, one does not fall far! They are, however, somewhat raised, and one need not fear damp. The ingenious man who made them has found means to supply them with a wire mattress, which is fine. For bedding, straw. With my two blankets, my capote, my kit for a pillow, and my tent-cover, I sleep wonderfully.

During my daily round across our positions, I made a couplet about the Commandant, sung to the air of "*Bois mystérieux et forêt profonde.*" He is delighted, and wants a copy. I hope to do something of the same kind for all the officers of the battalion.

I press you to my heart and embrace you all round, commending you to God. His goodness to us is immeasurable! For my own part I confine myself to saying, "Thy

will be done"; for He knows better than I do what is best for us. And the hope of a reunion near *Him* is such a comfort!

JANUARY 21. The fall of snow has been followed by a sharp frost; so that the snow holds firm. It seems like fairyland to see the heads of the great pines gleaming faintly under the soft light of the stars; and one asks oneself, *why,* when Nature is so peaceful, men should make war! Our sanitary condition is excellent. Nothing is more natural, with the life we lead, which, for the time being, resembles somewhat that of Arctic explorers, rather than that of soldiers of today.

JANUARY 26. The regiment is in mourning since the day before yesterday. Our dear Colonel has been killed in a sharp partial engagement, in which our battalion did not take part. We all feel sick, and laugh no more! He was a Chief in every sense of the word, and a man of heart. We all trusted him. He was prudence and courage itself! He fell in leading two battalions

to the assault. It was not his place; but he was entirely in the right. He knew that it would be a hard fight—that the men might give way—and he placed himself at their head to give the example.

FEBRUARY 3. We have at last found the body of the Colonel; at fifty metres from the German trenches. After several vain attempts, a soldier wrapped himself in a white cloak, so as to be less visible on the snow, in the moonlight, and by the aid of the extreme cold, he crawled quietly to the body, which adhered firmly to the frozen ground. He fastened a strong rope to the body, but the frozen snow cracked, and the Boches heard the noise, and began to fire. Happily, they could not distinguish the figure of the soldier under his white covering, so that in spite of the fusillade directed upon him, he made his escape to our lines. When the firing was over, he returned to the body and succeeded in bringing it back. He had taken the precaution of fastening it to himself, in order to be able to draw it to the trenches in case

he might be wounded. He has been raised to the rank of corporal, and will receive the Military Medal, and the Croix-de-Guerre with the palm.

(The same day.) I have just returned from the funeral of the Colonel. I have seldom been present at a more impressive ceremony. The little village church, filled with soldiers in field uniform;—those marvellous chants, sung by a choir of troopers; those solos by an opera-tenor of Lyons; and, at the cemetery, our flag, crape-veiled, and the Cross! Never have I felt so moved! No more differences, no more diversity of opinions, around these two emblems, symbolizing the two ideals for which we are fighting—God and our country!

The tenor, in uniform, sang the Requiem and the *"Dies Irae."* The figure of Christ dying on Calvary opened His arms above these soldiers with revolvers at their sides; and in the distance we heard the firing of the guns. What contrasts, and what grandeur! But we could not believe that in that bier

slept the beloved Chief whom we would have followed—no matter where!

The Commandant had designated Captain Cornier and myself to attend the funeral, because "It is you two whom he loved the best!" he said. I wept like a child, and that did me good. Our poor, beloved Colonel! The General who pronounced the address did not conceal his feeling. He said, "My dear friend Dayet and we have cherished the same hopes, and it is our consolation in our grief to know that some day we shall find each other again in the heavenly country! We pray to God to be very near to your widow and your children!"

FEBRUARY 5. Yesterday afternoon, I climbed to the height of 872 metres, in order to observe, from thence, the whole of the enemy's positions on a front of eight kilometres. You cannot imagine the beauty of the panorama! It was marvellous—the mountains of Alsace, the valleys, the woods, all covered with snow, to a great extent bathed in sunshine, seeming to breathe

peace; and—in the midst of that magnificent spectacle—little human emmets, firing cannon or gun, stretching their wire entanglements through the peaceful forests! How brutal can man become!

We were near the frontier; but at our feet lay a French village, occupied by the enemy, where we could see civilians going about. What a strange feeling must be that of the people who, looking up to the mountain sides where we are, say to themselves, "There *they* are, and we, *we* are in Bocheland!"

FEBRUARY 18. (From a trench partially occupied by the enemy, and at six metres from this last.)

My men are absolutely overflowing with enthusiasm, goodwill, and courage. They have decided, if the enemy attack, not to let him pass. The other day, during a bombardment of twenty-six hours, I was convinced that we were to be attacked. I said to my men, "I count on you, my children. The order is to die where we stand, rather

than yield an inch of ground. In case I should be killed, there must be no panic—no hesitation. Continue to hold on, *without* me, as you would *with* me! I ask of you but one thing—if I am wounded—that two of you should carry me off, so that I may not fall into the hands of the enemy." The men replied, "Be easy, my lieutenant, we will do our duty. Only let them come: we are waiting for them!"

FEBRUARY 23. The Brigadier-General has come to inspect the position, and is very well satisfied with what we have done. In order to give you some idea of the *morale* of our *poilus,* I copy for you this notice which they have put up in my trench:

"Grand Hotel of the Trenches, and Boyau's Hotel—United.

Messieurs the travellers are begged—

1. Not to lean out of the windows, for fear of vertigo; for the trench is completely underground—the parapet being even with the ground.

2. To abstain from all relations with the opposition concern across the way; the Directorate not being responsible for possible accident.

3. Not to use the space in front of their own parapet, in order not to annoy their neighbours.

4. Not to take advantage of the light, though it may not be counted in the bill (for there is only one night-light).

5. To avoid as far as possible putting their earth-bags into their pockets on leaving.

N.B.—The Directorate regrets not being able to accept Messieurs the travellers for more than 24 consecutive hours. (The service being very fatiguing in this corner—I have the section relieved every 24 hours).

It is useless to place one's shoes at the door, before the relief—the chambermaid being unable to ensure service before eight o'clock.

In order to consult the *menu*—in which no alteration will be made—address the cooks, at La Fontenelle. There will be no addition to the price of the chambers for travellers not taking their meals at the hotel.

The Directorate is absolutely firm in regard to the application of the above rules."

Not bad, is it? You see the proximity of the Boches does not hinder fun and spirit. I feel sure that our neighbours opposite amuse themselves as well.

FEBRUARY 24. Thank you, my dear ones, for all your kind letters, and for the brave words they contain. I am glad that you

take, in a true French spirit, the situation as it is, with its perils, its risks, its dangers of all sorts. You are right when you say that I will do my duty. Be easy on this point. And it seems to me that, if I were a father, it would be for me a great comfort, a privilege and an honour, to be able to say, if I heard of the death of my son, "He died at his post—for his country!"

Certainly there are hours when one would wish to live, to have children, to bring them up in the path of honour, to make men of them, and to make use, for their education, of all one's acquired experiences! But no one in this world is indispensable.

FEBRUARY 25. Yesterday I arrived at the Commandant's quarters, when the situation had become perplexing and anxious. At the end of five minutes I had rallied him out of it. "Ah! you have done well to come—you cheer me up!" he said. I gave, this evening, to my comrades a "scene" representing my supposed arrival among the Boches as a prisoner—questions and answers. They

laughed immoderately. I believe that if I were not here, there would be little social life in the battalion. I wake them all up; and I assure you that there are times when one has not too much cheer for himself, with all his energy to keep it up! But to know that the men have confidence in one is sufficient to give one courage.

MARCH 1. I made to-night, while on guard in the trenches, a parody on Mignon. The Commandant claimed it.—"How old art thou?—The meadows have grown green, the flowers are faded, and I come from the Kaiser, to fight the armies.—What is thy name?—They call me Hector and then also André," etc., etc. You may be sure the *morale* is not bad, since one can make verses!

MARCH 8. I have great news to tell you. Listen! I have made my request to be passed into the active service. If God grant me life, with His grace, I shall have much finer work to do in the army, as an educator, than in training. Possibly it is presumption

on my part, but I feel myself needed.* When one has seen much of our admirable soldier, and known his splendid qualities, and also his lamentable defects, of which carelessness is one of the worst, one would fain labour to form generations of men such as France needs—men possessing character, courage, foresight. The moral *rôle* of the officer is greater than that of the professor. enthusiasm, goodwill, and courage. I can tell you without boasting that my company has been transformed since I have taken it in hand. My men are much more disciplined, and in better form. My students loved me much, I know; but I love better the affection and confidence of my old grumblers, whom I handle without gloves, but who count on me. When I say to them, "Children, such a stroke must be made today: my lads, I depend on you," and they reply, "Be easy, my lieutenant, we will do our duty," I feel an inexpressible moral

*Cornet-Auquier awaited for nearly a year his confirmation as officer in active service. He had just been called by this title when he was struck down by death.

satisfaction. After the war I shall set myself to make of my soldiers men such as France requires, men of character, disciplined, knowing how to govern and to lead. Those who survive must profit by the experiences and mistakes of the past!

April 4 and 6. Ah, well!—do you know that in this Holy Week, I have saved a soul, or at least prevented the loss of a soul! And, curiously enough—irony of the battle-field—the soul of a young girl! A harrowing story: father and mother dead—the first after having ruined his family of four children; one brother killed in battle; one who is dying of a wound; a married sister who lives fast, while her husband fights. She herself, the youngest, scarcely twenty years of age, with an iron will, a morality irreproachable, struggling against her surroundings, but fearing snares—not knowing to whom to address herself; pretty withal! "I knew that you were not like others," she said to me. "Will you advise me; help me? I have no one now; my brother is dying; and I can

do nothing with my sister." I replied that I would willingly advise her, if she was decided never to follow the example of her sister. What intuition led this young girl to me? Did she read in my face that I should do her no harm? But it is an alarming task, for a young officer thus to take charge of a soul! Poor little forsaken creature! What a life is hers! You should have seen and heard her at your side—her tears and sobs—as she repeated this sentence, "If *maman* could see me—if *maman* were here!" I have gone with her to the hospital to see her brother, who is dying slowly; and to the cemetery, to her mother's grave; and she has vowed to continue to conduct herself well. But she wishes to change her atmosphere; to breathe a purer air. She said to me, "I have such need of peace!" Here every one is very kind and careful with her. Commandant Barberot and Captain Cornier are much moved by such misery.

April 24 (to his mother). I should be ruled by but one idea—*Our Country!* Now

the Country, what is it, if not all that is dear to us, all that we prize the most? *Thou* art "the Country"; my father is "the Country"; my good little sisters are "the Country"; that poor little forsaken soul that I have just saved from the jaws of the wolf—by miracle—is "the Country." What is the word "Country"? What is there in the word? Nothing, if behind it there come not—pressing in a crowd—blessed images and beloved faces. We do not die for vague abstractions, and words void of meaning. We die for sentiments; we die for love; for affection; for tenderness. Then I let my heart draw, where it can, great energies and pure heroisms. It is free from shackles; but it is strong with all the affection it contains.

MAY 4 AND 8. This evening we have learned the death of Leon Gambetta. The Boches opposite have sung psalms in token of joy.

We must have been blind not to have seen that Germany was preparing aggression. In fact she has been preparing since Jena, in

1806; and 1870 was only the first effort. The dream of Germany, since then, has been to found a vast German Empire in Central Europe, and to give, to a Hohenzollern, the empire of Charlemagne!

MAY 15. Eight *poilus* of my Company have held in check, to-night, from eighty to one hundred Boches, who, armed with bombs, grenades, guns, revolvers, hatchets, had just made a raid on one of our advanced posts. After half an hour of fighting, the enemy, amazed at the noise made by us, and blinded by my *projecteur,* has beaten a retreat. One of my men, wounded in the hand and the chest, continued to throw grenades until he lost consciousness. The chief of the post, a sergeant, has been full of *sang-froid,* launching *his* grenades,—also,—under a shower of bullets! Commandant Barberot has addressed to the companies of his battalion this Order of the day:—*Vive la première Compagnie!*

MAY 23 (to his mother). My very dear little mother. I have to-day received three

letters from thee, and roses—roses of Chalons, leafless, except two white ones, which were kept fresh by thy kisses. I have gathered up the fragrant petals of the red roses, and have placed them on water, in a bowl, from which they shed sweetness. I am very glad for thee, dear mother, that thou hast Marguerite with thee for some days; that is for me a comfort to know. I see thee surrounded with tender and intelligent care, and that reassures me.

The weather is delightfully fair and warm. I think I have written to you that I have had a pond installed near my post of command. By an ingenious canal system, the water of a stream has been conducted hither—left to be warmed by the sun, so that the men can bathe in it. This innovation has naturally much amused us. It was *new!* And then it was *water,* and water is very amusing to big "boys," even when they are sub-lieutenants —not to speak of lieutenants commanding companies! Still more—we have discovered a miniature fire-engine, and naturally we

have not failed to make use of it to water each other copiously!

We are very well fed, and are delighted with our cook. It is the same brave cyclist, Mornieux, who serves us. We have tried all sorts of tricks on this good fellow and have never succeeded in making him angry!

On this wonderful Pentecostal Sunday, I pray God to bestow on you and all whom I love His most precious blessings.

MAY 25. Yesterday, at five o'clock precisely, in order to celebrate the entry of Italy into the *Entente,* bursts of artillery upon the Boches made them enquire whether we had not suddenly gone crazy, for, at the same time, trumpets and drums were sounding, and beat the charge, while the band of the regiment played the *Marseillaise* in our trenches, which greatly moved me.

MAY 30. Yesterday I went to see Commandant Barberot, and much enjoyed the moonlight walk. The temperature was ideal. The night-birds sent forth from time to time their wild cry. Intermittently we

heard shots, and the sullen growling of cannon far away in Alsace. At dawn the fog cleared away, letting a sifted light pass through. There is nothing more beautiful than the pines under their young buds of tender green, contrasting with the dark green below, and giving the whole an air of velvety softness.

The other day I found, in a deserted house, two lovely kittens, whose mother had been killed. They were thin and almost unable to walk. I have rescued the little orphans and feed them with milk; and they are ravenous. I brought them here in a nose-bag; one of them made her *entrée* into camp on the shoulders of one of my correspondence agents!

Commander Barberot proposes me for mention in the Orders of the Division for services rendered, during eight months, as commandant of a company. I have fallen from the clouds! I told him that I had not done any striking action, and had no wish to be mentioned. He replied, "When a com-

pany possesses the moral value and the courage of yours, it is due to its chief;—consequently—besides—it is *my* affair!" I have not insisted. You see me in possession of the *Croix-de-Guerre!*

[Shortly after, he merited by his heroism a higher distinction. That of the Order of Division was replaced by his promotion to the rank of Captain.]

MAY 31. My dear parents.—Your son is a Captain!

[After mentioning the touching way in which his Commandant had announced the fact, and the congratulations of his Brigadier and Divisional Generals, as well as his subordinates, he adds:]

And see! In the moral world of the heart, all this passes chiefly into a deep joy for my little mother—and my father. I know that you will shed a few tears when the news reaches you. *That* also passes into an ardent desire on my part to make myself worthy of a title which means "He who is at the head."

JUNE 4. My dear ones.—Great tidings

succeed each other! We are leaving these regions where we have been fighting for six months, to go to other places which have seen us before! We leave in eight hours for *Alsace!* I ask you to accept this news, and to face the prospect of the dangers I am going to meet, with the calm of seasoned troops and entire trust in God. He can protect me there as He has done here, and should I pay with my life, my debt to my country, He will have permitted it, and consequently that will be well! I want you to feel, as Christians, ready for anything! I am sorry to leave this region of St. *Dié,* where I have spent so many beautiful hours. One grows attached even to the places where one has suffered most!

Poor Marguerite, who expects to come to see me here on Sunday, will be sadly deceived. But who knows? I may find her again in Alsace! *That* would be still better. I embrace you most tenderly and commend you to our Heavenly Father. He is all-powerful, and nothing shall happen without

His will. May *that* be done! Your great Captain:—André.

JUNE 5. I received yesterday the kind letters in which you express your joy at my promotion. I well knew the little scene would be almost as you describe it. I did not doubt that my father would feel in it one of the greatest pleasures possible in present circumstances. I assure you that, if I have been glad on my own account, I have chiefly been so for *you*.

JUNE 11. We are now forty or fifty metres from the enemy lines. The hour is approaching when we shall leap from the trenches to dash with the bayonet on the foe. I shall have no greater support and no greater force at the moment of charging at the head of my men, than to feel,—or to have the absolute conviction—that I have obtained from *you* that state of mind alone worthy of Christians and of Frenchmen! To know you ready for all sacrifices—*willingly agreed to*—would be to me the surest means of being able to do my duty as a Captain. God

has so wonderfully protected me hitherto that we must trust Him to do it in circumstances infinitely more trying, and in the midst of dangers a thousand times greater. What gratitude do I owe Him for having brought me to this day, while so many others have already fallen; and how I should wish to be more worthy of so many benefits. If it should be His will, without which nothing shall happen, that I fall on the field of battle, do not cease to bless Him! He works for our good. And then, let us not be as those without hope: if it is not for here below, it is for the higher life—and *forever!* I should not wish that the strong affection which unites us to each other as a family should be for me a source of weakness or effeminancy: I would rather feel it a breastplate to make me strong against danger. I have always desired to be brave! You must help me to be so! You rejoice with me in my promotion: I rejoice in it on your account. The honour done me carries with it duties that I wish to fulfil without flinching.

I pray God to help me; do you the same! I embrace you with all filial and fraternal affection, while I commend you to our Heavenly Father.—André.

JUNE 14. I see, with pleasure, that you accept with true Christian and French stoicism the prospects opening before me! *That* is a precious consolation, and I thank you for having given it to me before the hour of attack, which is fast approaching. We *ought* to conquer and we *shall* conquer! Everything is admirably prepared, and we are this time at least equal to the Germans.

And now, *au revoir!* God bless and keep you! Be strong in His strength!

JUNE 15. (An hour before the attack. The cannon are raging. The battle is beginning. Forward, to victory! God guard you, and pour out His blessing upon you!

JUNE 16. (The morrow of the battle of Metzeral.) My beloved ones.—A very great success for the battalion! A forcible assault; nearly 300 prisoners and much material taken. Our losses are light; but some are

very distressing. The Commandant is safe. I was with him at the head of the attack. In a quarter of an hour we had carried three lines of the enemy trenches. At the moment when I felt it was Victory, I wept—a nervous breakdown. I cried aloud, "Maman! (Mother!) *Vive La France! La Victoire!* And, not finding any one else to embrace, I fell on the neck of my brave little adjutant and hugged him like a good loaf! We were soiled with dirt, dust, powder—but gloriously soiled! Quite dirty still—not to be touched save with tongs; and with a beard of ten days' growth! I embrace you tenderly.

I have taken much booty. A Boche lieutenant has come and surrendered to me. The Colonel has said to me, "Captain Cornet, I come to bring you the congratulations and the thanks of the General in command of the army." Praise God, who has so wonderfully protected me!

JUNE 17 AND 18. All goes well! The victory is complete. The Boches, turned back, are everywhere beating a retreat;

setting everything on fire. The General of Division has just come to shake hands and congratulate me.

What a sensation is that of victory! That ground conquered—the pursuit of the enemy, who asks only to give himself up, and then the almost childish joy of having escaped death!

There were two phases in the attack—a special preparation of artillery firing, which, during three hours and a half, showered on the enemy more than 5,000 projectiles; then, during the last bursts of our cannonade, when our 75s were hissing, an epic charge of a whole battalion in three successive waves; a charge which, we have since learned, compelled the applause of those who, from points of observation, beheld the scene. Imagine a volcano—clouds of smoke, a deafening roar, in the midst of which the charge is sounded by the trumpets of the battalion—but—above all else—the repeated cries of a thousand men, "Forward! Forward!" A gleam of golden sunshine making the bay-

onets glitter, and then—the rush upon the foe—the conflict—mouths contracted with a savage smile, and cries of fierce joy at seeing the quarry fly. To right and to left —resistance weakening; then—suddenly— 296 Germans, eight being officers, surrender themselves prisoners. The Germans appeared quite glad to give themselves up! Those who jabber French say to us, "You—good comrades!"

We share to-morrow in a new operation. But remember that, when we force ourselves to kill, it is because this is indispensable for the safety of the country! At present we are at its disposal. Always trust more in God. Oh, what a beautiful thing is the Christian detachment from the things of this world!

JUNE 20. We are leaving for a region still nearer than this to the mobile Alsatian Hospital. There it would not much surprise me if I were to see Marguerite this evening, or to-morrow! What say you? Would not such a meeting, on *reconquered territory,* be for her more delightful than any rest if—as

I hope with my whole heart—it were possible? I can see Marguerite's astonishment at seeing me. In any case, it is now almost certain that if I should be wounded I should be taken to her hospital. I find this prospect so reassuring and consoling!

JUNE 21. This morning a very touching ceremony has occurred:—Commandant Barberot* has conferred on me, before my company, the *Croix-de-Guerre*—with the palm. He addressed some words to my men, and read the text of my "mention" in the Orders of the army. In conclusion, he said, "That is why I am happy to fasten the *Croix-de-Guerre* on the breast of my friend, Captain Cornet-Auquier." That word "*friend*" has given me great pleasure. Then he embraced me, and the Colonel did the same. And here I have the medal of bronze in the shape of a cross, emblem of faith and hope, on my

*The Commandant Barberot, killed at Liege in August 1915, was an officer of quite exceptional courage, and had greatly contributed to the victory of Mezeral. His battalion has been called, since his death, "the Battalion Barberot," and has been itself an object of special mention.

capote, with the beautiful green moiré ribbon enwrought with crimson stripes. *You* were present at the ceremony, I assure you! For the rest—await events with confidence. The Will of God—*that* is enough.

ANOTHER LETTER OF JUNE 21. We have come to camp just above the village where Marguerite is at present. It lies at my feet. I have sent a verbal message to my sister by Lieutenant Guillemin, whom my father knows. We have traversed, in coming hither, the prettiest corners you can imagine—real routes for wedding journeys!

The Commandant and I are seldom apart: the death of our friend, Captain Cornier, has brought us still more together. We have shared the same chamber, the same bundle of straw, the same morsel of cheese, the same crust of bread.

The battle is ended, for the time, at least; and we have progressed considerably. The German prisoners admit their enormous losses. They seem to be quite happy at having surrendered, but they were at first

terribly afraid of being shot. Their officers —they say—tell them that we kill our prisoners, and that they had better fight to the last. We prove to them the contrary by being as kind as possible to them. The Commandant and I have given them tobacco and cigarettes. One may hate the nation, and its leaders, but these soldiers—taken individually—have only obeyed their orders. It is, on the contrary, the *officers* who know not how to inspire any pity: most of them are insolent in the extreme.

JUNE 25. I have seen Marguerite! At the entrance of the village of Kruth, a group of white caps awaited us:—Marguerite and her colleagues! She rushed towards me at once—arms outstretched, clapping her hands, but deadly pale. I leaped from my horse, and you may imagine the embracing! Shortly after, the battalion arrives, and these ladies go quite into the centre of the village, to be present at the march in. The people, civil and military, give us an enthusiastic reception. The band plays the air of "You

shall not have Alsace and Lorraine,—and in spite of you we shall remain French!" We arrive at the upper end of the group of nurses: they applaud to the echo, calling out "*Vive* the First Company." I believe I made them the finest salute with my sword that I have ever succeeded in making!

The march ended, I am brought to the hospital, where I meet with the Marquise da Loys-Chandieu. These ladies arrange themselves in fours, to serve to us—the Commandant and myself—a supper composed of all sorts of things. The ladies, with some young girls, made a circle round us, who—soiled, muddy, rough-looking—had, for these women—fresh, young, neat, fragrant with soap and disinfectants—the charm of being real warriors, reeking of the trenches, and smoke, mud and powder! They are delighted;—we feel that they enjoy seeing us so close, and hearing from our lips the story of our exploits;—hearing us speak of charge, bayonet-assault, and exploding shells! We are the first whom they have seen return

from the front, after real fighting; we breathe of battle, to their delight. The Commandant is in good form; he relates his stories with unaccustomed spirit, which draws from them bursts of laughter, so fresh, so gay! It is delightful! Amidst all this—Marguerite close to me, gay and grave, smiling, but still moved, with her saintly air and her large eyes! I remain with her till eleven—then go to rest.

The regiment departs the next morning at 4.30. At four o'clock Marguerite is up, but as we depart in an auto, the Commandant bids me ride with him. We start later, and with our carriage *de luxe* we can overtake the convoy. We depart after six o'clock. Marguerite has seen the whole Company, and been presented to my officers. It was easy to see that she enjoyed sharing a little of our life. The Colonel, the Commandant, the Surgeon-General, were all full of attentions to her. At our separation there were some tears, but we have been very brave. And truly what a blessing to have been able to see

each other again for some hours—on the *Front* itself!

JUNE 26. The Boches will soon bite their fingers for having attacked our positions during our absence. We shall undoubtedly retake them with little trouble. I do not go back at all from what I wrote to you on the eve of the last battles in which I have taken part. I know you are ready and tearful, determined, resolute, firm, before danger. In my opinion, if I should lay down my life, your greatest consolation would be in the fact that I should have died for the country, at my post, while doing my duty. We are leaving for the trenches.

The Commandant Barberot, called away to take command of the Fifth *Chasseurs*, yesterday made his farewell to his battalion. He knew, as always, how to find the words that carry force. All were in tears. You can have no idea of the acclamation he received. When his battalion was far off on the road, and he was returning to his dwelling with a bent head, we could see that

he came back again, and, lifting his hand to his *képi,* saluted his "children" for the last time. Poor little battalion! *That* is what our success has been worth to us! My *morale* has been low since his departure; but we must react in remembrance of him for the sake of the men who count on us—for the country!

JUNE 30. Thanks for your letters. I expected them as they are—full of courage and emotion. You know that, whatever touches me, I report immediately to you; and if you are able, through my letters, to represent to yourselves scenes like these of the attack at Mezeral, or of my decoration with the *Croix-de-Guerre,* how much more easily can I, knowing so well your surroundings, picture the little family scenes on the arrival of such news! I know well that your eyes were wet, and when I read *your* letters I had my turn of emotion! They have done me much good. There are days when one needs all the affection of those who are dear to us, in order to remain strong in the face of certain

events. To know that you are so happy that I have done my duty—my very small duty as officer and leader—gives me force for the future. Your confidence and your courage do much to prepare me for future conflicts. I place you both in the "Order" of the First Company, as "knowing how to communicate to their son the energy and the calm which live in them."

JULY 2. (His birthday.) Thank you from the depths of my heart for your loving thoughts. I know that they are constant; but also that they are particularly tender on this 2nd of July—and that your prayers have been more fervent.

Yes! it is wonderful how God has guarded me. And, as my father asks himself—*why?* I am worth no more than others; probably,—even certainly—less than many who have fallen. My father asks—what are God's designs for me? I do not even ask! I live strictly from day to day; and—for the morrow—for the day unfolding itself, for each hour—I content myself with saying to Him,

"Let Thy will be done!" and I find *that* good and reassuring. But do not bestow on me flattering epithets. I am no hero; I have tried to do my duty in all circumstances. I am only an officer who tries to set that example; and that is all—*all!*

JULY 9. The day after the glorious battle of July 8, 1915, at La Fontenelle. Telegram:—Safe and well, success, loving regards.

JULY 13. Telegram:—All well. Decorated—Legion of Honour—by Generalissimo. Loving regards.

JULY 13 AND 15. My dear ones.—I have so many things to tell you that I do not know where to begin; and I have lived through days so horrible that I hesitate to return to them and to renew their remembrance; for every time I speak of them the painful sensations reawaken, the images of bloody spectacles reappear, more vividly; the nightmare revives in its horror; and I seem to find myself transported all at once into the midst of those scenes of desolation and death.

Yes! it is Victory, brilliant, incontestable, and how dearly bought! You might well doubt it, since, in the hasty line I wrote you, I said that I commanded the battalion. And —a wonderful, extraordinary thing—a Divine blessing—not one of the officers of the First Company has had a scratch! What, then, has this Company done? What guardian angel protects them with his wings? Moreover, it had the most dangerous *rôle;* it was taken on the flank, by the fire of grape-shot which our artillery had not been able to silence.

We moved out under a shower of shells! What grape-shot! What a hell! When I sent forth my sections to the assault—one after another—and prepared to leap forward with my staff, a shell of great calibre struck my post of command, blinding me with earth, and burying a man beside me. Then there was the rush, under the shell-fire, through the smoke—the mad rush under the bullets—and then the Victory—the total victory! The Boches surrendering in crowds

of 20, 30, 40, 50, 100, unmanned, imploring, with clasped hands, and arms raised to heaven: *"Gut Kamerad! Gut Kamerad!"* I have never seen a bootblack so low, so abject as the German who surrenders, whining, bending low! The officers are arrogant, even in defeat: the men are flat as beetles. By evening we had made 600 prisoners. This has gone on during the night, and the following day. At night we rapidly organized the conquered territory.

On the morrow, the enemy artillery began a volley of revenge, so dear to the Germans; but the aim was astray. We felt they did not know just where to find us. Nevertheless, my post of command—common to the Chief of Battalion and myself—is already fully surrounded, but by shells of small calibre—of 77s only. We smile at that!

But on the day following, the attack begins. About four in the morning a German plane finds us out, and the firing recommences. The shells fall all round us; then they come nearer, and the circle of iron and

death closes in. At eight o'clock it happens. The fatal projectile arrives, like a water-spout—shell of 139! It explodes at a metre and a half from us, kills, wounds, massacres! Groans of the dying, outcries of the wounded, in the midst of dust and smoke—it is horrible! Five killed, of whom one is my Chief of Battalion; four unhurt, of whom I am one. I have had one telephonist killed, almost under me; my *képi* is saturated with his blood. Two of my staff are dead. My cyclist is unhurt.

The shells continue to arrive: we profit by the cloud which surrounds and conceals; and, one after another, we slip out of this hell! Faces and hair full of earth—black—foreheads wet with perspiration—we hardly seem human! What a day! And then—the battalion left without a head; and for me a very burdensome succession.

But God has come to my help, and He has blessed me. All has passed well. I dare not reflect on the mystery of His will in not allowing me to be slain like others. This

"*why*" is an obsession to me. What is He about to require of me? To what task is it His will to call me? I do not know. What am I—my God—to receive such blessings? These questions agitate me, and in the midst of such reflections I must think of the battalion—of the men who now depend on me.

In critical moments the man looks to his leader, and seeks to know what sort of head he has. There must be nothing in my expression betraying disquiet, nervousness; it must suggest only confidence, serenity. I had, before a comrade, when the shock was over, a burst of tears; but the men did not see it. To them I said, "My children, we must think of the country!" Two days later I learned that Joffre in person would decorate me with the Legion of Honour! The ceremony of decoration takes place to-morrow morning. The flag has received from the hands of the great Chief the *Croix-de-Guerre,* the regiment itself being mentioned in the Orders of the Army, as follows:—

("This regiment, two battalions of which

were three weeks ago mentioned in the Orders of the Army for having carried a strongly fortified position on another part of the front, has renewed this exploit at La Fontenelle. Carried away by its ardour, it started before the end of the artillery preparation, and arrived at the first enemy trenches with the last French shells; it has carried a position comprising several lines of trenches and casemates, has made prisoners nearly 900 Germans, of whom 21 are officers, and has taken a considerable booty in guns, etc., etc., etc.—has installed itself on the position and defies all assaults.")

Is this mention famous enough? Here is Joffre's opinion on the 133rd—"With the troops of the 20th corps I have seen nothing better."

Joffre asked my age. "Twenty-eight, my General." "How young you are! This Cross should bring you much happiness, and I am very happy to be able to present it you." Then he embraced me with two resounding kisses; and I returned his embrace, trem-

bling with emotion. In the afternoon I had an interview of more than an hour and a half with the General of Division and his officers of the grade of Major—charming people! The General was amiability itself, made me sit by him and discussed things with me. In the evening I was invited to dine, by the General of Brigade.

I greatly miss the Commandant Barberot. I feel so much alone, after all these shocks. I have not yet got rid of a painful excitement, and pain in my heart. However, God is there!

JULY 29. I have met André Paulus. I was passing on horseback through a village when an *aspirant* of Artillery sitting before a house, rose and came to me. I recognized him at once. You may tell his parents that he looks splendid. It was very interesting —this meeting of two *Chalonnais* in this little village of the Vosges!

JULY 30. Your kind letters received. I am glad to know that you are resting at Fontaines, in a sunny house, with a garden,

trees, a lawn, water—after Chalons! There are hours when I would give much to be there, if only for a while—not to hear the guns, or have the preoccupation of attack or of counter-attack. Nevertheless, I am certain that I should miss the *front;* it would seem that, because I was not there, things would not go right! We are, for the time being, a little in the rear, in immediate reserve; and I feel much more nervous than on the front itself. Yesterday I went on horseback to see the Colonel. The General of Division arrived. He was going up to the trenches, and I begged to accompany him, and went with him, to see, study, show him all I knew of the situation. I am captivated by the military life—to the marrow!

August 7. I believe that before long I shall go to see you—on certain conditions.

[Then follows a humorous list of these conditions, intended to let his family see his desire that they would not in any way *lionize* him. The visit of ten days was thereafter paid, and his parents had the great joy of seeing their beloved son, glowing with health, overflowing with life, good spirits and

enthusiasm. On the evening of the last adieu, he threw to them, as the train moved out, these final words, "After all, if I am killed, it is for France, and—*Vive la France!*"]

(On) AUGUST 20TH (he wrote to them): The *morale* is good—if only the civilians hold out! You know how happy I was to find myself again at *home!* In my heart I prefer to be at Fontaines; it was more restful. And then—*home* is where one finds one's own. May God bless and keep you in physical and moral health! May He give you the strength that comes from absolute and entire confidence in His goodness!

AUGUST 29. Yesterday morning the battalion went on a march, with its pennon flying. We overran in every sense, the streets of Saint Dié—our band in front, through an extraordinary crowd! The people were excited, for it was the anniversary of the entrance of the Germans into the city, and it is we who have delivered them! Flowers were showered on the soldiers, and a lady, approaching my horse, presented me with an

immense bouquet, tied with wide tri-colour ribbon. With my sabre in one hand, my bouquet in the other, I was myself so excited that I could only cry, *"Merci, Madame!"* In the afternoon, the Chief of the Safety of the Army and I went to Plainfaing, to place two crowns on the grave of poor Commandant Barberot—a very modest one—a mound—a wooden cross—a crown of the Chasseurs—some little faded wild flowers. To think that a man so highly intelligent and cultivated, so lively and overflowing with activity, is lying under some feet of earth! It is unimaginable! I shall never console myself for the loss of that man!

Having need of some distraction, I went to-day, under a pouring rain, on horseback into the woods, alone. I ascended to more than 750 metres! The great, mysterious woods, full of mist and silence, were impressive. Even the shower that lashed my face was delicious!

SEPTEMBER 4. I have been thinking that perhaps there might be some means of find-

ing at Chalons, among our friends and acquaintances, some ladies who would form themselves into a Committee of "Godmothers" of the First Company of the 133rd, and who would send me, for this winter, comforts of all sorts for my troopers. It grows cold early in our mountains. I believe that there are such persons of all parties and creeds. It matters little, so that my *poilus* are kept warm! I charge Lucie to recruit members, of whom Madame Rosselet should be President. It would be "Work of the *Marraines* of the Lions"—*Vive la France!* —Hearts high!

[Needless to say, the wish thus expressed was amply fulfilled.]

SEPTEMBER 29. It will be a year to-morrow since, under torrents of rain and senseless shelling, Commandant Barberot gave me the command of the First Company. A year! How many things have happened since then—events, disappearances! And I am still here! Why? The gratitude I feel

seems so little beside His blessings, and one feels so unworthy of them!

September 24. With two officers and twelve volunteer *poilus* I have made a reconnaissance by night in proximity to the German lines, in a corner which has for a long time puzzled me. Protected by my patrol, I slipped through the bushes, then into the grass, taking a rambling walk. In the silence of the night, I could hear the pick-axe strokes of the Germans, or their hammers on the pickets for the iron wire. It was impressive. I have thus been enabled to make a most interesting reconnaissance, and see the ground under an unexpected aspect. We found that the enemy had installed in this wood a post with telephonic communications. We cut the wire and carried away a length of 200 metres.

The Bulgarians have played us a mean trick, but I am not worried. It may prolong the war, but cannot have any influence on the final result.

October 27. Yes! It is a pretty story of

the flowers thrown, in Switzerland, by the wounded French on the wounded Germans. But enough of that sentimentality! For the moment we can have nothing but hate for the murderers of Miss Cavell. When I think that her story might have been that of Marguerite, that makes me furious! Graceful acts will do later! They are just tolerable in a neutral country, as a diplomatic measure; but that is all. I well know that when one sees them come out of their trenches, ready to surrender after an assault, haggard and worn out, one must pity them and readily yield to charitable sentiments! I should be the first to do so in such a case. But it is necessary to fight on, and even to feel that they are hardly *men* that one has before him! However, the neutrals disgust me still more. How one can *be present* at such atrocities as the Germans commit in this war, and remain indifferent, is unimaginable baseness!

NOVEMBER 2 (in rest). Marguerite here! Since yesterday morning, at ten, till to-mor-

row noon. Is not that stunning? She arrived in the cantonment with two *chauffeurs*. Sensation here! The officers are of course charmed to have her at table. She has seen the places where I fought in August, 1914, the chateau of Saulcy-sur-Meurthe, where I just escaped being taken prisoner—the station where you arrived last December, etc., etc.

NOVEMBER 5. What a pleasant remembrance this delightful visit of Marguerite has left behind it! Regrets also—but at the same time infinite gratitude. War, when one is in immediate contact with it, gives to a thinking man the exact sense of his worth. One comes to recognize no other authority than what is based on an incontestable mental and moral superiority, on a fitness that makes itself felt. In other cases one salutes the "*stripes*," and he who is saluted should see in the glance whether he is considered as a Chief or only according to his grade. Only confidence in oneself permits one to speak loudly and firmly and to make oneself heard,

even by superiors, and this is in a manner a duty, for at this moment nothing counts but the country's safety.

NOVEMBER 25. We have renewed our snowball contests, and—valiantly reinforced by my cook, Martinaud, and by one of my men—I have held the lead over all my sub-officers and staff. You may think whether it amuses them to land a ball full on the face of the Captain!

NOVEMBER 24. Yesterday I represented the Colonel at the funeral of one of our young comrades, killed by a bullet in the head. At the cemetery the Commandant of his Company said a few words, as well as the General of Division, who recalled the remembrance of Commandant Barberot, whom we all regret. These deaths in the trenches impress us most, for one has time to think. To die in an assault, under the excitement of thundering cannon, and clarions sounding mad charges—in the whirlwind that carries you into victory—is *fine;* but to fall, trapped

by a stupid bullet, while one is observing in the trench, seems sad indeed.

DECEMBER 9. There are days when I envy my dog. No care, good food, good bed, dozing and snoring, at his ease. It seems to me that it would be so restful for some time to stop thinking. It is the cerebral and nervous fatigue which kills us: *there* it is no question of excitement as in physical fatigue. To march all day, to sleep on the straw, without undressing, *that* is nothing. Rain, snow, cold, wind—nothing more! But it is the *head*: there are days when I feel used up. And then nothing, nothing, for the *heart!*

DECEMBER 13. The Frenchman has enormous qualities of courage, of heroism, and even—one would hardly believe it—he has shown himself tenacious; but he is naturally careless and undisciplined. We have much trouble in obliging the men to observe the rules of the most elementary hygiene. The Frenchman is admirable in redeeming his defects by marvellous qualities, when the

crisis is on. He would do better if he were to avoid the crisis, in knowing how to foresee it. We are tenacious to-day. The Boches were so fifty years ago. We have known how to improvise, but there are spheres in which one cannot improvise—of which war is one. Under pretext that we did not want war, which was well, we have not believed in its coming, which was much less well; and not believing in it, we did not prepare, which was almost criminal!

December 22. If I had occasion to address a Christian audience, or one calling itself such, I should speak something like this: You believe or profess to believe in God, in a God who is a Father. You believe in His Justice, in His absolute power and His absolute goodness; you believe that nothing happens without His will, and His will is essentially holy, good, and wise. Then place confidence in God and patiently await the event. Say to yourself that Justice must triumph, and that the Right shall finally

conquer brute force, because God has willed it so, and will continue so to will forever.

The cause of Justice and of Right is His cause, and it is ours. It is to us, armed allies, that He has confided it. It is we, then, who shall triumph. When? How? I do not know, and, after all, it matters little: the final result alone counts. Do not fear, then, *only believe!* Be no longer troubled, nervous: do not recriminate or criticize. Do not say, "If I were Joffre, or the President of the Council." You are neither—thank God—neither Joffre nor Briand! If you tremble, it is because you do not believe in the final victory of Justice and Right, in the triumph of God's cause on the earth. Then be logical, and say that God is not God, and that, for twenty centuries, the world has been deluded in believing in the law of love proclaimed by Jesus Christ; for in following, like Him, the same law of love, are dying the admirable soldiers of France and Britain, of Belgium, Serbia, Russia!

DECEMBER 24. While I write, our artillery

is thundering. It will doubtless do the same to-morrow; and this kind of music is not what one would wish for Christmas Day. Nevertheless, in spite of it all, I esteem it a chant of peace which comes out of the mouth of our cannon. They chant the approaching deliverance, the new age for which we labour, for we also—we are workers for "peace on earth." Unhappily, the Boches brought about a set-back of humanity of millions of years. But peace shall come, although its birth may be full of suffering.

DECEMBER 31. My dear ones.—The last day of the year! To-morrow it will be 1916. With what dizzying rapidity have passed these twelve months just gone! It is not at all surprising that the time should appear so short, when it has been so closely filled—when events are so packed into the little compartments that we call days and hours, that it sometimes seems impossible that so much could have been held in so small a space. What a tense, full life we live! We shall have tried the entire gamut of emotion,

sweet or tragic, joyful or sad. What a trial for men's nerves! Poor human nerves! poor little fragile things! For it is always with our nerves that we live a factitious and abnormal life. Also, when one reflects, what shall the young generations be worth, that shall have passed through all this? How worn out and exhausted they will be, and how soon grow old! There are moments when, in living again these past hours, one feels overwhelmed, depressed. To come out of that nightmare, of that stifling atmosphere, and then to say to oneself—to fight, *fight on!* Never to speak of the future! Never to be able to say "to-morrow"! On the threshold of a new year, it seems as if one had arrived at a kilometric borne, but the kilometres are not marked! One sees the distance run; one knows not that which remains to run. Forward! The way is still long and laborious; but victory is at the end of it! As Jeanne d'Arc said, "The soldiers shall fight, and God shall give the victory!"

REMIREMONT, JANUARY 15. I have left

the trenches yesterday, to come here, to follow special courses. The passage was all right—an excellent road among the mountains and firs. The end of the journey today is that I have telephoned to Marguerite. At the first stroke I recognized her voice. "Hello! What art thou doing there?" Rapid exchange of questions and replies. M. M. himself has added two words, and has promised to take me to her next Sunday.

JANUARY 5. The course is very interesting. It is inspiring to hear the President of the course, who comes from Champagne, relate his experiences, and it is most stirring to hear him say to us—"We have been within a hairbreadth of the *Grande Percée*."

[On January 9th he had the pleasure of bringing his sister the same evening from the Alsatian front to spend two days with him. And on January 23, by a happy coincidence, he had the greater one of seeing the President of the Republic fasten the *Croix-de-Guerre* on the breast of the same sister, and setting out with her from Alsace to spend two days' leave at Chalons-sur-Saone. He left his "dear ones" on February 3, to return to his post in the trenches, at M metres from the enemy. He

there learned that he had just been named *"officier active."* It was his last satisfaction.]

FEBRUARY 7. We have surprised conversations among the Boches. The *morale* is very low in their army. Those in the rear write discouraging and depressing letters to those in front. At Nuremberg whole families retire to rest early, in order to forget their hunger. The Boche soldiers call our "A" an accursed cannon, and pray to be preserved from it. For conquerors, their *morale* is very low.

On the contrary, the *morale* of *our* men is excellent. For three months they have been mounting guard in the trenches, through cold, rain, snow, and wind, securing your safety and serene slumber and of your daily life. Their *morale* has not failed for an instant: they are altogether admirable. Their heroism, to us who live beside them, is our daily bread, and does not seem strange, but on a little reflection one arrives at the conclusion that every one of these *poilus* is a true hero. I am specially proud of those of

my Company, which decidedly—without being as perfect as I could wish—is easily *"First,"* not only by its military number, but by its quality. My men feel it. They know that at first it is irksome—*"ça barde"!*—but they know that they belong to a first-class company, and have for captain a serious devotee.

FEBRUARY 8. My thoughts are often with you. Marguerite is on the point of departure—she also. I shall feel a tightness of the heart on Thursday morning, when it will be her turn. I hope she will find you courageous and trusting. We at the front have so much need of feeling the courage and confidence of those we leave behind us. That helps us to bear everything, and we feel that we labour for *something.*

FEBRUARY 11. The blank must be great at present—at home! But it is for *France!* Follow the counsel given in little Rosselet's song—"Close the ranks!"—elbows together; make your affections general, your energies individual, your trust personal; realize al-

ways more and more the intense and profound life of the family, and above all, place before the affection of your children the love of country, and intolerance of the invader. Never let discouragement penetrate your hearts. Be *French!* It is on this condition that we at the front shall be able to struggle with that intense energy, which triumphs over all—the price of victory!

FEBRUARY 28. (Referring to the battle of Verdun.) Do not let yourself be much impressed by the events at Verdun. That German offensive does not trouble us at all. Every kilometre in advance costs the Boches 25,000 men. At this price we might well have abandoned the fortress to them. Verdun would be a great moral success, certainly, but, after all, modern war has shown the small value of fortified places as a means of halting the enemy. Behind Verdun there are successive fortified zones, successive lines of trenches, wire entanglements, etc. After six days of fighting, and unimaginable effort, the enemy has not attained the half of the

result obtained by us, in Champagne, in forty-eight hours. In two days we had taken from him 150 cannon. The Boches will not have the success they seek.

[But the end of the weary struggle was nearer—for *him*—than he knew. About four a.m. on the first day of March he was wounded in his cantonment, by a fragment of shell, which, entering the chest, pierced an intestine. On leaving his comrades, on his way to the hospital, he said to them, "If I die, it is for France: that shall be your consolation!"

On arriving at Ste. Die he was operated on at once. The surgeon hoped for a miracle of healing in the case of one so healthy and robust. But the fragment had not been found, and he undoubtedly succumbed to a slow internal hemorrhage. It was the kind of death he had desired *not* to die, and had prayed for that; but he knew that *"God was there,"* and that His will was best! His father and sister had hastened to his bed-side. After the operation he had asked one of the nurses: "Tell me in all sincerity, if you think I shall recover. It is due to an officer to tell him the truth." But the truth was withheld from him.

As he suffered comparatively little, it was only at the last moment that he comprehended that death was near. Then he said softly, *"Maman! Maman!"*, smiled at his father, then murmured very low, "We must accept; we must submit." And his soul passed away to eternal peace. For *him*—the war was over: God had "given him the Victory"!

ALFRED EUGENE CASALIS

Alfred Eugene Casalis

ALFRED EUGENE CASALIS, whose letters come next in order, had much in common with André Cornet-Auquier. Both were sons of Christian homes; both true and pure-hearted knights; both faithful and conscientious in seeking to do and submit to the will of God; both inspired by "the love of Christ" and devotion to His cause, as well as by an ardent and self-sacrificing patriotism.

In minor characteristics and experiences, however, they present a marked contrast. Cornet-Auquier was, as he expressed it "a soldier in his soul" and "a soldier of France," before the outbreak of the War. Naturally —therefore—in August 1914, at the age of twenty-six, with some previous military training, he plunged at once into what was

evidently to him a congenial career, in which he met with early promotion and well-earned and coveted distinction. Alfred Eugéne Casalis, a student of eighteen years, enlisted voluntarily as a private, and gained promotion only after a hard apprenticeship. But if Cornet-Auquier recalls Chaucer's ideal "perfect knight," the character and brief life of Alfred Casalis seem to bring before us Tennyson's conception of Sir Galahad:

A maiden knight—to me is given
  Such hope, I know not fear;
I yearn to breathe the airs of heaven
  That often meet me here.
I muse on joy that will not cease,
  Pure spaces clothed in living beams,
Pure lilies of eternal peace,
  Whose odours haunt my dreams:
And stricken by an angel's hand,
  This mortal armour that I wear,
This weight and size, this heart and eyes,
  Are touched to finest air!

By nature he had scarcely seemed specially designed for a man of action—still less—military action. At eighteen he seemed, rather, a quiet and thoughtful student—a *thinker,*

though a worker too; some may add,—a dreamer. If so, he dreamed well! He came of a Huguenot missionary family,* his father and grandfather having both devoted their lives to carrying the gospel of Peace to the dark places of the earth. Born under the British flag in the Mission-Home at Morija, among the Basutos, in South Africa; and nurtured in its warm, tender Christian atmosphere, he had, from earliest childhood, devoted himself to the same noble cause. He had gone through his preliminary education, with this end in view; had entered his second year at the Theological Seminary of Montauban, when the progress of the War and the peril of France pressed their claims on his serious attention. His decision does not seem to have been made without a struggle between his long-cherished purpose and desire, and the urgent call of his ancestral land. Strongly

*His grandfather, Eugene Casalis, an eminent explorer and missionary, had, with his colleagues, Messieurs Arbousset and Gosselin, founded the French Mission in Basutoland, then a savage country under no European protectorate.

as he felt the contrast between the life of a warrior and his chosen ideal of one spent as a "minister of consolation, of hope and love" to a suffering world, in "following the example of the Master whom he loved and sought to serve," the call of patriotism and justice was too strong to resist. His only consideration seemed to have been—whether he should be able to fight with a good conscience, in a right spirit, and from right motives. This settled—his decision was made, though not without a natural conflict. Gifted as he was with a clear intellect, a sympathetic heart, a passionate love for noble music, and all that is beautiful in Nature,—there was much to regret in the prospect he was leaving behind him. We can trace it in his last letter from Montauban;—in the wistful description of his quiet study, his books and papers lighted by the clear lamp and crackling fire, with the flowers on his table that recalled the thoughtful care of his beloved home.

But—the decision once made—he hesitated no longer. Without waiting for the "call"

upon his "class," he enlisted as a private, before he had completed his eighteenth year. How cheerfully and uncomplainingly he underwent the often irksome drudgery of elementary training—how his irrepressible vein of quiet humour lightened this and the minor physical ills it induced in his not over robust constitution, and—what the new life and its personal sacrifices did for his spiritual life—can best be seen in the letters written to his beloved parents in all circumstances of stress and strain—even from the battle-field itself! His tender affection, his chivalrous desire to allay their anxiety by words of cheer, show clearly to the last. And in a sort of "Testament" or last Confession of Faith, found in his pocket, after his body had been bravely rescued for interment, he had expressed his earnest desire that "all who loved him, all whose hearts had beat with his, should be able to use the words he had verified in his own experience—"Because I live, ye shall live with me."

Had he not found the mystic "Grail"—the

emblem of that cup of true life which the Lord and Giver of Life pours into the hearts of all who will receive it?

II

LETTERS OF ALFRED CASALIS

MONTAUBAN, NOVEMBER 1914. Everything is strangely calm here—the people, the town, the plants, even the animals! Everywhere there are soldiers. It is the only thing one remarks. One feels far—far—from the war, as if it were passing somewhere in time and space, and that here we are not in it!

But this must not be. One must react. One must feel that if *They* fight and struggle, it is for our *good,* and that this creates for us *duties*—the duty of thinking of *Them;* of labouring to make great and beautiful the country which they *defend;*—to pray for *Them,* if one has the faith.—And then our time will perhaps come also. And for it, while awaiting it, one must collect oneself, open one's eyes to face death, learn to live with it at our side, so that its coming may not

surprise us, to prepare oneself to receive it as a distinguished guest who will lead us away towards *life!*

And then, too, one must try to see whether one *can* fight—whether one has a soul sufficiently clear of hatred to fight without animosity: whether one has a heart sufficiently inspired by *love* to fight "*for others*" and not just to "save one's skin;" if one is sufficiently decided to be a champion of Right, of Justice, and of Liberty; if one loves Justice so much that one will maintain it afterwards,—in order to fight with the certainty that our victory will give to the work of universal regeneration one good worker the more! And then one must watch, *watch* for *all* suffering surrounding us, in order to solace it; all injustice which touches us—in order to crush it; all justice which calls for our aid—to make it triumphant.

It is our "Vigil of Arms." And our watchword here is "Christ and France!"

November 16. Since the beginning of the war, I have thought with infinite gratitude

of all those who have gone to fight, that we might be able to remain in security and peace. And I thought, above all, of Paul* and those to whom he was attached by his dream of social justice and the common will to deliver humanity from war. I thought with admiration of all those pacifists who by a painful effort had succeeded in uniting their ideal of Peace with the necessity for fighting!

He will not see the triumph; *He* will have known only the sacrifice! But we who remain—we who are now "Young France,"—we make oath on those graves freshly dug, stirred by them to resume the work of our elders. May they rest in peace! Our life, henceforth, is consecrated to *their* ideal, which has become *ours;* and with the aid of God, we shall make this ideal victorious!

NOVEMBER 21. My room is always the exquisite little sanctuary where I feel myself content! The clear lamplight encircles all that surrounds me, and—a little further back—all things repose in the shadow, except the

*A cousin who had fallen in action a fortnight before.

hearth where my fire is crackling. I have before me, on my table, all my books, written and read also, for the most part, with so much love and fervour. And then *you* are there my father, and you my mother, under a bouquet of chrysanthemums!

Never have I felt so peaceful as on this evening, since I have left Paris. I have enquired what is to become of us; whether we should be called up—we of the class of 1916.

At the Barracks, Montauban, January 7, 1915. I am a soldier of my own free will, and not by the decision of others. What would you have? It is vain to be a pacifist now. There are circumstances where nothing can hold one back. To begin with, when one sees what atrocities our enemies commit, one understands that it is necessary to put an end to them the more quickly, and, if one can help, to take part at once. And when one knows that there are some who are slackers, who put themselves in hiding, one cannot resist. One *must* go!— — —

Nevertheless, you know whether this is

contrary to my nature, to my ideal, to my vocation. I, who wish to make myself a soul of succour, who had only one ambition—to bring, to those who suffer, a sympathizing heart, overflowing with words of hope and love, like the Master I love and wish to follow. And here I am—at the Barracks!

[In the month of January, after having spent the Christmas vacation with his family in Paris, he presented himself before the Council of Revision and —anticipating the call of his class 1916—enlisted as a volunteer for the duration of the war.]

CASTEL-SARRASIN, JANUARY 15. Since my arrival at Montauban, I have gone to have myself enrolled in the 11th Infantry. On Wednesday, the 6th, at two o'clock, I went into the Barracks. An hour afterwards I had been transformed into one of the most hideous foot-soldiers of France and of Navarre!

First, shaved clean as a convict; then clad in a uniform as dirty as a uniform can be. The overcoat, ripped in several places, has a large round burn at the base of the back, it may be from a shell explosion, or else the

former proprietor had sat down on a lighted cigar. Further, in the said capote I could find room for more besides myself. The vest, on the contrary, is too small, and the sleeves —too short—and have been darned and mended with white thread and red! Finally, the pantaloons, greasy and too short! You may add, for the present, that I have not shaved for eight days. From the toilet point of view all one can do—is to keep clean! My equipment completed—I was informed that I was to be sent to Castel-Sarrasin, where the class of 1915 of the 11th of the line is stationed, to which I am attached.

On Thursday morning I had my kit, canteen, blanket, gun, cartridge-box—and in short I was ready to depart. But I did not. Saturday I employed in making myself *forget,* so as to postpone leaving till Monday, in order to be able to spend Sunday at Montauban. Unhappily, at noon, the sergeant springs upon me, makes me prepare in all haste. I descend into the court, and depart with four other "blues."

I am quartered in a school-hall where there are twenty-five of us. It is warm, and we sleep well. For exercise they make us drudge (*barder*), an expression dear to my adjutant. I get on very well and the *régime* does me good.

Alas! here my letter must end! There is the call for 8.15, and it is 8.05. I have still to cross the town to regain my cantonment, for I write from a *café,* where I have been lent a soiled table, a broken pen, muddy ink, in a room where sixty soldiers read, shout, and play at cards; on which account I pray you to excuse my writing, my style, and the absence of my ideas!

JANUARY 17. We have just been vaccinated against typhoid. There were about 1500 of us—all of the 11th. The puncture has not done badly, but the arm has begun to swell. All night I have had fever and a violent headache, which has gradually passed off; and now only the point of puncture is painful, so you see it goes well.

Nothing is harder than to go to sleep in our

chamber. Among the thirty *poilus* it holds are about twenty peasants from Corrèze, all lodged in the same corner of the granary. Distressed at not longer being able to dance the *bourrée* before going to rest, they indulge in head-splitting whistling. On my side are the Bordelais, who, in ability for noise, are not behind the Corrèzians, with whom, besides, they have great rivalry. You can judge of the tranquility one can enjoy. Finally, about 10.30, silence is established—not for long, however, for they are no sooner asleep than they begin to snore, both Bordelais and Corrèzians!

On Sunday we were confined to barrack because many cases of measles have shown themselves. Until 10 a.m. we do nothing. Afterwards—soup,—after which I ramble along the road of Moissac. At four I go into a church and hear vespers. The organs are good, and the organist very skilful. Then there is soup; and I am writing to you a little before lying down. I am definitely attached to the 9th Squad. The quartermaster

has given me the "skin" of a mattress and pillow, saying "I have no straw: bestir yourself to find it." I wander about the neighbouring farms, and finally I find wherewithal to stuff my mattress,—not without trouble.

I know slightly my corporal, who is from Montauban, and—though a Catholic—used to mingle with our group of Lyceum Christians.

I am one of a squad of corporals in training. We number 104, and need only twenty-six corporals. Naturally, to obtain the necessary selection, we have to work hard.

How much one needs to enter into himself after a period of barrack life! One lets oneself go;—grows accustomed to live without any real communion with our Master; to pray only in words and formulas. Oh, that those who *can* pray, who have the time and strength, would pray for all those who cannot!

MONTAUBAN, FEBRUARY 12. I have just spent fifteen days in the hospital with measles. After ten days of high fever, I have

rapidly recovered, without any complication. On Friday, I left the hospital, very tired, but that was all. When I arrived here I was exhausted, faint, with pain in the eyes and a beginning of bronchitis. And I have only eight days to cure all that, and be capable of resuming my post. I have seen the doctor, who orders rest, and not to go out before 10 a.m. or after sunset. I am very prudent, and strictly observe my orders. In fact, I am bound to enter the ranks as soon as possible, in order to depart with the rest. It seems that we shall leave for the Front between the 1st and the 20th of March—I say *"the Front;"* in reality it is nearly certain that we shall be taken into the fighting zone, in order to complete our preparation.

Some people have thought that, after the unpleasant experiences I have had at the barrack, I should much regret having enlisted. I have had them told that, if it were to do again, I should do it again, and with more enthusiasm than the first time! I should have much liked to tell them so myself. I am

happy and at peace, because I know Who is there and watches over His own.

MONTAUBAN, FEBRUARY 13. CASTEL-SARRASIN, FEBRUARY 13. Many thanks for the parcel. I much appreciate your choice of books. I circulate them a little. My unfortunate comrades are amazed. They did not believe there *was* such fine literature; and they devour it.

This morning the weather is clear and sweet. I have the chance of my first outing since the hospital. It is delicious—marching on the fresh morning route. I am inspired and filled with delight by the physical exercise. We march very fast, and in the calm air only one step is heard. I am happy to have resumed my place and to be no longer an *infirme*. We are beginning to work hard.

FEBRUARY 20. To-day I received news which gives me much concern, and before making any decision I wish to speak to you about it. There is to be here a meeting of officers of the reserve in training in order to

engage them as volunteers, called from the class of 1916. Those who shall be received will be placed in a centre of special instruction where they have to work in order to be made officers of reserve. Those who will have worked well will come out with the rank of *Aspirant,* and will be afterwards called (at the Front) sub-lieutenants, which, evidently, is a great advantage, especially for future service.

But that means a delay of at least four months before leaving for the Front. Now I ask myself if the acceptance of this delay would be a slackness on my part. My comrades will doubtless depart for the Front in a month; and I—should I remain under cover? I might depart only at the moment when the hardest work (the expulsion of the enemy from the trenches) will probably be finished! And then is it not my duty to remain with those here in order to help *them?*

FEBRUARY 25. I wish at once to tell you where I am. I was much concerned on the subject of the examination of officers in

training of the reserve, between the alternatives of "Yes" and "No," and not at all seeing my way, when—on Monday morning—an unforeseen event came to free me from embarrassment. This very morning at "*Rapport,*" the lieutenant asked from the Company fifty volunteers to depart for the Front. There was no room for hesitation. I saw my duty, and signed for departure. These volunteers will probably leave Castel this week. They will be a certain time at the dépôt, a certain time at Montauban, no doubt: then they will be sent to the Front in the second line; and, on April 1st, they will be in the trenches. This is, at least, what we are told. Naturally I have offered myself. I shall only have closer drill for some time; and when it shall be time for departure I shall certainly have done everything in good form. I pray you, my dear mother, do not distress yourself for me. I have, for a long time, considered these eventualities; and truly I could not do otherwise than offer myself. Our kind Heavenly Father will certainly care for His child.

FEBRUARY 28. They make us work to the limit, and truly we have begun to feel that we are soldiers, and capable of something! On Friday evening there was a march and drill by night. At 7.10 we assemble in absolute silence, fully equipped, at 7.25 depart. It is fresh, and we march fast. At 8.15—halt. The weather is clear; the sky a very light blue—pale grey at the horizon. The leafless bare trees impress one in the magnificent moonlight. We piled arms, and the men sit down and talk among themselves in a very low tone. The scene reminds me of Détaille's "*Rêve* ("Dream"). Finally, we return. At this moment the moon is surrounded by a marvellous halo, the most beautiful I have ever seen, and so large that almost the whole of the Great Bear could be twice contained in it. Soon they halt, and we are divided into sections, each having to place sentinels and organize the service of safety. I stand sentry for twenty minutes at the edge of a little wood. While I am there a good peasant comes to offer me a draught of delicious

wine,* and I assure you it does me good! He goes thus from group to group to refresh the sentinels. We return, at a great pace, and it is eleven o'clock when we reach the barrack. Yesterday afternoon I underwent my last puncture against typhoid. The others did not give much trouble, but this one has given me a high fever, and my arm is painful to the shoulder, which is swollen. I hope this will not amount to anything.

MARCH 1. I seem to have bad luck! Not feeling well,—I have seen the doctor this morning and he tells me that I have an abscess, in formation, caused by the vaccination; and here I am in hospital, suffering much.

MARCH 2. This trouble has not developed, and was not after all anything serious. I feel again quite well, and to-morrow return to my true place, which I would not have wished

*It should be borne in mind that the wines of France are much lighter and milder than those we usually call by that name. The *vin ordinaire*, the national beverage, is usually a very mild stimulant.

ever to leave, to resume my gun, and kit, and drill. Hurrah!

March 3. Think of it! The Major would not have me as a "volunteer"! On Thursday afternoon we have all passed a medical inspection, and a third have been rejected. I do not cough any more; but it seems that I retain a small remnant of bronchitis from my attack of measles. And eighteen of us are out! The examination has been severe, because these "volunteers" are destined for a select corps, with special spirit and training. You may understand how it pains me to have to remain; however we must know how to accept, and accept joyously,—above all; because there are many looking to us. It is this thought which has permitted me to remain quietly here—I was going to say, almost with joy; it is the thought that I am going to be with the young men whom I now know, and who know me, and know obscurely from Whom I draw the little strength I have.

If you knew how much better I under-

stand the human soul, above all, the souls of humble folk, who labour, who struggle, who suffer, who hold to life only by a thread—some bribes of affection, a little interest, some enjoyment, and, above all, many habits! Ah yes, often have I regretted that instinctive reserve which possessed me in old times! There are such riches—when one knows how to plunge into the depth of these souls; I have learned to love them, and now I try to speak of them. Oh, how that faith, which I felt at certain times so strong and luminous in myself,—oh how often it has seemed to me dry, scholastic, composed of subtle distinctions of words,—when I have had to speak with these simple souls who know only *life*, who have never heard of Idealism, or of "Spirit" or "Matter," but who quite simply live and suffer! There are moments when I have asked myself if there should be one religion for the people and one for the intellectuals, and consequently two distinct moralities (*morales*). But no, I *knew* to the contrary, and I think of the

Apostle's words—"*Christ the same yesterday, to-day and forever.*" And was not He Himself a carpenter? and has He not said "Blessed are the poor in spirit?"

These words give me true and real pangs. There have been in my faith many beliefs more or less vital, many hopes irregular in acting, which harmonize only because I am fundamentally an idealist in the philosophic sense of the term. Without this idealism I feel there would be gaps in my faith. But I know, with knowledge irreducible, and invincible faith, that the basis of my faith—to know God the Father, Christ risen and living, man subject to the duty of *Love*—is unshakable, that it is founded on the Rock!

For the rest what matters? Everything, little by little, shall become clear, luminous. If I should have to renounce such or such an axiom, I should renounce, I should retrench, until I should have attained that which is *the Life*, and which alone I seek,—at first to live, afterwards to be able to help others to live. We students, intellectuals—we permit

ourselves to be too readily absorbed by our "culture." We *assimilate* it, to the point of *becoming* it! And in this we do wrong. We ought to remember always that it is but a *manner* of seeing (things) and to seek to preserve *piously* that which may be our point of contact with other souls. And I mean by this, not merely a point of contact moral or strictly religious—*Christian*. I mean also a point of *intellectual* contact, the tangent whereby we shall be able to penetrate them, to become as one of them, as did Jesus. I tell you this as the words come to me. These things are old and often repeated. But the experience I have every moment gives them an immense value for me, and I regret my inability to express them better. Before the end of the month, I shall have left for the Front. In my heart I have had these preoccupations. There is also always there that "peace which passeth understanding" and which He has given us.

March 5. Behold now, I have the "*MUMPS*." I am now packing up, and re-

move this afternoon to the general hospital. It is an ancient convent, where I have an old four-poster bed. We are nursed by a charming old "Sister." On Friday my cheek was so swollen that I could see it without squinting. But I have had no fever or pain, and I rejoice in not being at all pulled down. My *appetite* is voracious; but they give me nothing but magnesia!

MARCH 7. I am passing a sad Sunday—the saddest of all my hospital Sundays! What makes it easier to bear is the certainty that as soon as I am fit to go, the Major will turn me out. Then I shall doubtless have, like the rest, six days' leave, which I shall come to spend at home, providing you want me. Write to me quickly; but it is only a hope!

[On March 11, indeed, our dear son arrived in Paris, and spent four days with us. He had regained all his strength and gaiety. On the evening of Sunday, the 14th, he left for his depot. Without knowing it we had bid him farewell forever on earth.]

CASTLE SARRASIN, MARCH 15. The depar-

ture from home was difficult; but at the last moment my Father and Mother were so calm, so quietly trustful, that one would have thought it a customary departure. Especially—when we had prayed together, all was lighted up, and we felt the absolute certainty that it was only a temporary *"au revoir,"* till we meet again.

Since this morning I am back at the barracks. I feel wonderfully well;—full of enthusiasm, of hope, of faith. This afternoon we have made a short march of fifteen kilometres under the hot sun and in the dust; all has passed off well. Never, for more than a year, have I been in better physical and moral condition.

March 16. (Extract from a letter written for *"Our Review,"* a Journal of the Christian Lyceums—for young men).

To sum up—the true power of a Christian soldier in his tenacity. *"Hold fast what thou hast."* Unhappily, that is not learned in a few days of preparation; it is the lesson of a whole life, and one never knows it well

enough. The essential point for a regiment is not to let it be brutalized. The spirit has only too much tendency to sluggishness. We must be on the watch unceasingly, and therefore be prepared in advance with some interesting subjects to study or think out during the hours of marching or of inaction.

Some of the most difficult moments that one has to experience in the soldier's life are the hours of march. It is then that the grossness of the men comes to light most clearly and shows itself in most lascivious songs. One grows heartsick and silent; but there comes a moment when even the most noisy have had enough; it is the moment of which one should take advantage, to bring out a song of his own choosing, clean, pleasing, elevating. We should not fail in this. As at the barracks,—it is with the less agreeable phases of life that one has to do: characters are not slow in revealing themselves, as they are.

One must declare oneself at once; show what one is—*a Christian;* afterwards *"hold*

fast." If one falls ill, one is free to remain apart, but never to forget our Master's law —"Love one another,"—translated more specially in this case by the "Scout" command, "*Do a good turn at all times.*" Through this attitude you are respected by the rest. And it is also the surest means of opening hearts.

MARCH 17. The time of departure is very near; in a fortnight we shall probably be at the Front. I shall go peacefully, with trust; I shall fight with a good conscience. Without fear?—I hope so. *Without hatred?—assuredly;* because I believe our cause a just one; because "France victorious" will have a mission to fulfil, a civilizing and educating mission of joint responsibility. I believe this, because I have accepted, for my part, such a vocation, and because I know many of those who have made it theirs. I am filled with an unlimited hope, which—beyond death—shows me the coming of a life renewed—magnificent!

MARCH 21. I know a "soldier boy"

(*"petit soldat"*)* who would gladly have written to you for Sunday,—but who has not had the time for it, and regrets it greatly! Picture to yourself that—yesterday morning—we were roused at 5.20; and the sergeant called out—"Full uniform!" As I was on fatigue duty, I put on red trousers, vest and *képi* and hasten to the kitchen. On my return I put on my shoes and gaiters and make my bed. Enter the sergeant—"All in undress!" One must jump, change in hot haste, equip oneself with kit, gun, etc. Scarcely is one ready when the sergeant returns—"Drop equipment and leave your bedding in the court." We free ourselves, throw down the bedding, then—forming fours,—remount the stairs, reassemble, and now behold us departing for Cordes! In the morning freshness, under a clear sky, we march at a great pace. After the climb, pot-luck; then rifle practice. We return very quickly; in the heat of the day the kit seems heavy, the feet sore, but we

**Petit soldat''*—a familiar French epithet, like our English "Tommy."

are glad to arrive. And now—at the gate of our quarters, we see the bedding, left exposed to the sun! We go up to unload; then come down to look for matresses, etc. As there are some ill, we must carry up other bedding besides our own; after which, without being able even to remove our shoes, we must run to look, first for tea,—then supper, for it is six o'clock. When at last we have been able to take our food and wash our faces, we are so weary that we can do no more than drag ourselves to the canteen, to drink something warm, and go up to bed. And *that* is why I have not written for your Sunday!

I have been thinking in these days about an article I owe for *"Our Review."* I intend to write on death; for I often think of it; of all these young souls, these new lives, that war has shaped afresh, and that, in the light of sacrifice, have become beautiful and grand. I think I shall take for inspiration those words of Jesus—"Father I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world but that Thou shouldst keep them from the

evil." But I do not know whether I shall write the article. If the ideas and words do not come as I wish them, I shall write nothing. Do not conclude that I believe myself near death. No. I have more than ever faith in *life,*—in what life must be, and I *wish* to live! But—all the same—I feel that if death should come to take me, it will not surprise me. One thing I should like—to have another Communion Service! I hope, however, that, at Easter, we shall not be far away at the Front. You have no idea of the peace in which I live. All those I love are near me,—very near!

We are all now in *commanded service,* and our service is *sacred!* Perhaps we shall be called to remain alone. Those who are departed shall be still with us, and the remembrance of their work shall remain. Moreover, they shall live in the light that our eyes perceive not yet;—quite near us. And we shall always be closely united, when we shall be one in Him—we in Him, He in us!

MARCH 25. We continue to work hard.

Almost every morning we have an hour of bayonet fencing and an hour of gun manoeuvre. In the afternoons, we are divided into two squads, one attacking the other. We advance as skirmishers, by rushes, and after each rush, one scoops out a shelter for himself, with a parapet. This closes with a bayonet charge—all howling like demons. Yesterday we made a trip to Cordes. *Réveillé* at 5 a.m. At 5.35 assemble in the court with field equipment: at 6 o'clock depart. It is fine, fresh, and the march pleasant. Certainly it is *Spring!* Along the hedges the hawthorns are in flower; and here and there are long clusters of clematis, violets, Easter daisies, buttercups! The men are in good spirits, humming gaily all the way. We arrive at the shooting-field about 8.30. From nine till noon, shots succeed each other uninterruptedly, and on the target, at fifty metres distance outline objects appear and disappear each ten seconds. One must shoot very quickly. I have done almost like a fellow who said: "My lieutenant, I see double there,—and unhappily I always aim at the *second* target!"

Towards noon, clarion-call, and we dine, seated under the trees, watching the flow of the clear and majestic Garonne. At one o'clock—*signal* whistle, kit on back, and *en route!* The heat is torrid, the climb is hard, and the kit heavy. The first minutes are trying; then one sets oneself to the march, and proceeds with spirit. When I have nothing on hand, on the march for instance, or at the drill, I sing internally. I hear the music which is sleeping within me: just now it is, above all, Beethoven, who appeals to me. One or two passages have specially done me good.

[A few bars are here jotted down, taken from Sonata VII, and X, Beethoven, and one from the 7th Prelude of Chopin.] You will excuse me if I have not transcribed it in the exact time. I have only tried to *show* you something I should like to say!

March 25. The Master's appeal is always pressing on my ears, or rather on my heart; and what am I doing to respond to it? I hear Jesus' reply to that question of Pilate, "Thou sayest it, *I am King.*" And behold, the

Prince of Peace, the Christ-King, is forgotten! His word, His commandments, His teachings are contradicted by the life of every day! Oh my France! what hast thou done with thy King? And the Church and all Christendom—what have you done with your Saviour? He was King by right, King by birth, King by the will of God, and his own have forsaken Him! He remains alone! But it cannot be thus. He *shall* be King! The "Volunteers"* have promised it. Francis Monod, Robert Prunier, others—many others—have died, thinking of that glorious reign which is to come, which is coming! Their death is a landmark towards the coming of that Kingdom, as their life has been one.—And then the new France must rise up for *this*—to make Christ King! And it is on those who remain, that the task must devolve of preparing new workers for the yellowing harvest. We swear it,—Lord: we shall labour for the coming of Thy kingdom! We shall give our life for that ideal!

*The Students' Volunteer Missionary Union.

March 28. We have been taught to construct for ourselves individual shelters. We attack as skirmishers—elbow to elbow: at the order to "halt" we lie down; and as fast as possible each takes off his kit and puts it in front, to protect him. The even numbers begin to fire; and the odd numbers should, while still prostrate, and sheltering themselves as best they can, hollow out a ditch, in which they should be able to stretch themselves out—a trench deeper at the head than at the feet. They heap up, in front, all the earth taken out, in order to screen it. As soon as that is sufficient to conceal a prostrate man, the parts are changed: the even numbers dig, and the odd ones fire. When all are sheltered, we change rôles again; we join and deepen the individual ditches in order to transform them into trenches for prostrate sharp-shooters (riflemen). The essential thing is to work fast, which is not easy when lying all one's length. In order to give a little zest to this experience, a line of "enemies" is placed in a previous trench in

front of the workers, and they receive blank cartridges. As soon as they see a man show himself a little too much, they shoot over the man, and he is declared "*dead.*" That does not prevent him from continuing to dig!

I believe I am ready to depart—speaking morally. I have tried with all my might to prepare for it. And I have accustomed myself to look death in the face: it does not terrify me. If I am to rest there, I am ready. I shall die without regret, because I know that others shall do, better than I, the work to which I have given myself: because I have the assurance that I have found my way, and that the Master will recognize me for His own. I am at peace: I know that the Father will take care of those I love, and will care for me. More and more it seems that I can live only to labour for this ideal, "*Thy Kingdom come*"!

April 1. We feel that the hour of departure is near. On April 12 we should be at Montauban,—the last delay! I begin to have enough of Castel! I do not go out any more.

This evening I have been to Church to hear the *Stabat Mater*. It was passable, but hardly religious, as to execution or audience. My corporal being absent, I replace him and must give the roll-call. Useless to return before 8.15; so I make use of some moments to read my New Testament. I have been struck by the words, "I have strongly desired to eat this Passover with you" (Luke 22, 15). This passage has struck me this evening: "Jesus, knowing that His hour was come, that He should depart out of this world, unto the Father." And that promise He made to His disciples strengthens me: *"Because I live, ye shall live also"* (John 14, 19). Oh, may *we* be able to "learn obedience by the things that *we* suffer,"—and to know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the communion of His sufferings, making ourselves conformed to Him in His death, in the hope of "obtaining also the resurrection of the dead."

April 15. I have had to-day twenty-four hours of leave, which I have spent at Mon-

tauban. To-day—Easter Monday—we have free quarters since noon. I have come out with five or six comrades; we have taken books, paper and fishing-rods. Then we have come to sit on the bank of the canal; we have dipped our lines in the water and are now reposing in the sun, chattering like school-boys. The canal, in spring, is the pleasantest sight in Castel. The sky very clear, and softly blue, the water lightly rippled, the trees on all sides growing green, the sun shining on the red in the men's trousers, and the peaceful flat-boats—all this made a picture very picturesque and very peaceful. When I wrote, last week, of being somewhat tired, I meant, by that, as I am almost every evening. When we have done in the morning an hour's fencing with the bayonet, and an hour of rifle-practice, the afternoon march of ten or twelve kilometres, made skirmishing attacks, and dug trench shelters,—we have but one thought,—to retire to rest as soon as possible. I keep wonderfully well, and at Montauban was complimented on my good looks and even on my *embonpoint!*

This is the story of my leave. On Thursday last we had been shooting at Cordes. When the hour of return arrived, the lieutenant said to us, "Let us try and catch up the 4th Company which left here twenty minutes ago." We then lengthened our pace more and more, which for us was easy, since we set out with kits empty or nearly so. Arrived at the summit of the hills, we saw the 4th Company one kilometre (about ¾ mile) in advance, and continued to hasten our march. But, by and by, they perceived that we were giving them chase, and quickened *their* pace. Seeing this, our lieutenant, each time that a turning hid us from them, put us to a running pace. Then the 4th followed suit. We thus gave them a steeple-chase up to nearly half a mile from Castel, where we halted to await the laggards. We were not more than fifty metres behind Company 4; and the ten kilometres* (6½ miles) had been covered in an hour and a quarter.

*Strictly speaking—a *kilometre*: ⅝ of a mile. A *metre*: a little over two feet (2.27).

The lieutenant was delighted. At *Rapport* in the evening he declared that any who desired leave had only to address him. Thereupon I placed a request, and on Saturday morning it was signed. I left Castel at three, took tea at the L's and supped at Madame C's. On Sunday I breakfasted with M.L., who had invited me and prepared a *monstrous* repast; and in spite of my remarkable appetite I was unable to satisfy him. In the afternoon I heard a very beautiful sermon from M. Louis Lafon on the text, "He shall wipe away tears from their eyes," followed by a Communion service very good and profitable—after the isolation of Castel! You may think how I enjoyed my Easter Sunday!

Last week, on the stair of the Barrack, I heard a big Limousin peasant whistling part of 7th Sonata of Beethoven! He had learned it from me by hearing me humming it during the march. To-morrow we return to ordinary work. As for our departure, we know nothing!

MONTAUBAN, APRIL 7. Here I am again at Montauban for some hours, and this time it is for departure. I leave with a detachment of 120 men to go to reinforce the———at the front,—Les Hurlus. On Monday evening at five o'clock, at the roll call, volunteers from the Company were asked for. Having been dispensed from roll-call, I was not there, but I was informed, during the evening, that twenty volunteers had been taken—sixteen to depart; the others to replace men of the first series who should be refused by the Major. On Tuesday morning at 6.15—drill, the inspection was to be passed at 7. The lieutenant arrives. A comrade and myself go to tell him our desire to go, and he authorizes us to pass the inspection. We go—a long inspection. The Major says to me, at length,—"You wish to go. No danger that you will be refused." It was 8.5. I was in undress. I go to my rooms, change clothes, pack my kit, return to the quartermaster all I no longer need. At 8.30 go below. At 9 o'clock we take the train. Arrived here, I find Pastor

Galley, and breakfast with him at the mess of the sub-officers, for he is adjutant. Then we adjourn to his chamber, where I find the Missionary, Robert Dieterleu,* Adjutant in the Chausseurs.

In the afternoon, we equip ourselves anew in tunic of fancy grey cloth, overcoat of mist-blue, small light blue képi, excellent shoes. Besides, rest-slippers, a large sleeping bag of waterproof canvas, pannikin, haversack, tarpaulin tent and pegs, tools, and canteen. At nine o'clock this morning we are to be reviewed, and will probably depart in the course of the afternoon.

I depart content, at peace. I thank you—my father, and thee, my dear mother—for all the love and tenderness you have given me, for all that you have imparted to me of faith and hope in life, and in our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you, also, for all that in parting you are enabled to say—that you will not

*A young Missionary of Rhodesia, the son of a Missionary in South Africa, who was reported *"missing"* in September, 1915.

suffer too much, because you know how we are guarded. I embrace you with all my heart!

April 7. Now we are leaving I depart with joy, thinking that, at last, I am going to *do something!* I am not afraid of dying. Now I wish to tell you, in all sincerity:—I have made the sacrifice of my life. I can do so without any fear.

In the first place, I know that to die is to *begin to live*. Not to live in an eternal felicity of contemplation, but to *live truly*. I believe that the dead live near the living; invisible, but present, and perhaps it may be *they* whom God sends to us, in response to our prayers, in order that their spirit, which is His spirit, may guide and inspire us.

And then I hope that I might have left behind me, in some souls, seeds which may spring up, some day, in the Lord's time. And all for which I have lived, all that I have desired to be and to do,—all this—I feel—will live again, will not perish!

Do not think that—because you and

others remain behind, without taking a part in the fighting—do not think you are useless —quite the contrary. There is something you can do—*pray!* Pray for those who have gone, and who need to be sustained. Pray for those who suffer. Pray the Master to send labourers into His harvest! Prayer is itself a struggle. It ought to be a battle, in which we succeed in conquering our own desires, our impulses, in order to say to God: "Thou knowest, better than I, what is best for us: enable us to place ourselves entirely in Thy hands, knowing that Thy will, whatever it may be, is the will of an infinite Love!"

I speak to you of death, because I am thinking about it, because I am doing all I can to prepare for it, since it is a possibility. Whatever may happen, remember that *He* "will wipe away all tears from their eyes." But I have faith in *life*, faith in God! Be not afraid, *only believe!* Have all confidence and also pray, in the place of those who are fighting, and who cannot themselves find the time to do it as they have been accustomed to do.

III.

AT THE FRONT

CAHORS, APRIL 7. 8 P.M. We left Montauban at 4 a.m. (16.21) and are travelling in a cattle-car, in which are thirty-two men. Fine weather; pleasant journey so far. Unfortunately—the Cahors buffet being closed—it is impossible to get anything hot.

CHATEAUROUX, APRIL 8. 2 P.M. It rained all night. The roof of the car leaked, and we got very wet. Have had change of car and are now royally installed in a first-class. Prime reception everywhere; fine, fresh carriages. No dragoons at the station! So could not enquire whereabouts of 4th Squadron.*

TROYES, APRIL 9. 8 O'CLOCK. A delicious night, in our first-class *coupé*. Slept like a

*His eldest brother was brigadier in this 4th Squadron, and fell fighting for France in 1918. He was to have been a Medical Missionary.

king. Everything continues to go well. Able to make first-rate toilet this morning. Going on to Neufchateau. All well.

Bar-le-Duc, April 10. 4 a.m. We arrived last evening at 10 o'clock. We were all asleep in the train when the call came. Speedily we dressed, looked up kits and guns. Many had never thought of these, since leaving Montauban. So, for a few minutes, there was a fine mix-up. Finally, we *leave* the station, and cross the town.

We are quartered in a large factory, on a little straw, and it is bitterly cold. Without blankets, we are freezing; but, all the same, I slept till 3 a.m. Then I rose and had a wash. We are leaving immediately, still in the train, for the front, which is only some 35 kilometres off. Of course we go in an unknown direction.

Armies of the Republic, Sunday, April 11. Our journey ended yesterday afternoon, and we have now rejoined our regiment. At five o'clock we left our factory at Bar-le-Duc, crossed the town, and took the train. Slowly,

on an average of fifteen kilometres an hour, we have crossed the line of hills, in the direction of Verdun. It has rained, snowed, frozen; but soon we have thought no more of it. To right and left of us we have left villages forsaken, bombarded, burned—the fields furrowed by shells. Everywhere—sockets of shells, empty packing-boxes, small lines of trenches and of graves;—small graves, almost flattened already by rain and wind, each marked by a plain wooden cross, most frequently anonymous; here and there a mound, a rifle, a fragment of shell, a bayonet! How sad they seem—these graves, lost in the young verdure of the fields!

At dawn we leave the train at Souilly-sur-Meuse, about twenty or twenty-five kilometres from Verdun, whose guns we hear. It is raining; the roads are covered with a whitish mud, very liquid, and everyone carries away more or less of it. In a field we line up, kit on back, and set out for the cantonment. The rain has ceased—the sun ventures out a little behind the clouds. For three hours and

a half we trudge on through the mud, and at length arrive at Heippes-sur-Meuse, where we still are.

Heippes is a small village at the foot of a circle of hills; where we see hardly any one but soldiers. The whole of the ———*Corps d'Armée* is in this region, at rest for the first time since it came out. What is it going to do? No one knows. The soldiers are horribly dirty, and uniforms torn, burnt, covered with mud. That can be understood, when one sees the life they have led in the trenches —sleeping on the damp ground, crawling through mire, splashed with mud by the shells!

The cantonment of my Company is a vast barn. Below there are cows. Above and to the right of the door, the first and second sections. We sleep on the straw, and there is no light but that coming through the door and the crevices between the tiles. A little higher—and to the left—the other two sections. We are crowded against each other in the breadth. Water is plentiful and good.—

Food excellent and sufficient. Altogether, it is better than the barracks, and I have slept like a king—but there are many-footed inhabitants, of all colours, shapes and sizes, it seems!

Of course we have received much advice, but chiefly this: "Lighten the kit as much as possible." Then we weigh things—the slippers, the pegs of the tent, the canteen, six biscuits out of ten, two out of three tins of preserves; and—as it will impede us—the sleeping-bag, for it seems the tent-cloth can be used to replace it. Think that,—thus lightened, the kit weighs still from fifteen to twenty kilos,* and that we carry, besides, 96 cartouches each—and we *should* have 150!

Above Heippes there is a hill which the Germans occupied, and which was carried between the 6th and 14th of September, by seven regiments—almost all of the reserve. The fighting was severe. On the summit is a mass of graves. It is said that there are 3000 men, as many French as Germans!

**Kilo* or *kilogramme*, unit of weight in metric system—a little more than 2 lbs.

In the principal trench, there is a base of masonry, surmounted by a great wooden cross, carved with inscriptions. On one of the graves there is also a large cross of white wood, and a crown, with these words—"In memory of Roger Couve." There has been much fighting hereabout. On all sides, villages destroyed and burned. It is frightfully sad! But I shall go;—I have no fear. I am at peace;—I feel myself ready. It is infinitely sweet to know that the prayers and the thoughts of those who love me accompany us everywhere. Besides, have we not said:

"Alike in joy and in pain,
I would Thy faithful follower be;
All of my life that may remain,
My God! I freely give to Thee!"

I think often of that France which *is to be*, which *will be* born of the "War for Liberty." She must comprehend her duty to humanity. Each must learn to know what that is, and what it requires, so that all may live in the consciousness of *Duty!* Not merely to have a duty, because one lives; but to live be-

cause one has a duty—so far as one has it, and knows it, to live for it!

I enclose two or three violets from here. The spring is always the same; sweet, fresh, a messenger of hope!

COURCELLES-SUR-AIRE, APRIL 13. On Monday last we left Heippes, to go farther to the south, to Courcelles-sur-Aire, where we have remained since then. The place is really charming, at the foot of a circle of hills, framed in little woods of ash and fir. The weather is always delightfully clear, fresh and sunny. Below the village runs a living stream of very cold water—the Aire. Yesterday afternoon, I spent two or three hours on its banks, writing, reading and bathing. Besides, I gathered a delicious salad of wild chicory. We are now arranged in groups of five or six, for meals, on a sort of co-operative plan. Each brings his contribution. Thus, yesterday, we had—besides the soup and meat, as usual—a salad of wild chicory with hard-boiled eggs, fried fish, wine and milk—a royal feast.

I have, as they say, "found the clue." My regiment, being a southern one, drinks a good deal of wine, and, as soon as they arrive at a cantonment, they all rush to the wine-sellers and grocers, and even to the peasants—with the result of not getting served. Now, while the others are scrambling for wine, I hasten to look for milk, and, if possible, a couple of eggs. That is worth so much more, as the milk is very good here, and I prefer it to wine.

Despite my fears, last night has been as delicious as the preceding one. The straw was damp manure; but I slept on my tent-cover doubled over, rolled up in my good blanket, my head on my kit, and have been as happy as a prince! However, we were so crowded together that I had to sleep on one side, and had no end of trouble in changing my position. But the morning was exquisite. There had been frost; the sky was clear, blue; and unconsciously, I began to whistle the *"Matin"* of Grieg.

About seven o'clock we have gone on

fatigue duty for wood. There were twenty of us. We did almost nothing for two hours, beyond warming ourselves in the sun, and breathing the pure air. It was there that I gathered the enclosed violets. At nine we brought back our wood at our ease.

The "*Rapport*" has just been read—that is to say, the lieutenant has declared that there is nothing to report! Drill this afternoon.

April 14. We are still at Courcelles, and no one yet talks of departure, but evidently we shall not remain here long. The cannon have begun to fire this morning. Now we do almost nothing but eat and sleep. Yesterday we started at one o'clock, without any encumbrance. Very gradually we ascend the opposite hills. Then we are led to the edge of the trenches up there, and made to examine them. Afterwards we prepare some combinations, and return at four.

Here, also, there has been much fighting, during the battle of the Marne. Our right wing here drove back the German left. Everywhere there are shell-sockets, bits of

wadding, splinters, fuses, loaders, broken pannikins, torn sacks! And then—*the graves!* Here and there a cross, or simply trenches, into which the dead have been thrown, without afterwards closing them up!

But life more and more resumes its normal course. Engineering skill has repaired the bridges and the roads: little by little, the peasants have set themselves to reconstruct; the bombarded dwellings have been provisionally restored—the walls have been propped up and haphazard roofs set on.

Many fields are worked, sown, irrigated, and the grain is sprouting. Last evening, in returning from the march, we suddenly met, face to face, a very aged peasant, quite wrinkled, but proudly setting himself to the task of sowing, once more, the fields which his children could no longer cultivate! The old man, though more aged, resembled "The Sower" of Burnand. He was truly a touching spectacle.

This afternoon, again, we have gone to exercise. We have done little more than a

walk of a dozen kilometres, very lightly sprinkled with rain. For my part, I found the promenade charming; the country is pretty; we see many interesting things; and it is excellent exercise.

April 15. During all day, there has been, in our vicinity, an important movement of troops. Since 6.30 a.m. regiments have been defiling, headed by their bands; then there have passed trucks, ambulances, artillery, cavalry, and yet more infantry. In the afternoon, from time to time, troops were still passing. So we have been asking whether we were about to depart, in our turn, to-night or to-morrow morning.

Finally, this afternoon, we have been sent for at the moment when we were beginning to commence drill; we have been recalled to the cantonment, and there has taken place — — — — the *Fête* of the battalion, which was not to have been celebrated until next Saturday! There have been races (of 100 metres) and a sham fight. I ran, but having fallen, I only arrived second in the semi-final, and,

for my trouble, I have gained—*a pencil!* This morning I went for a round among the hills. It was truly exquisite. The air was warm and sweet; all the valley was bathed in blue mist, almost transparent; and the motionless poplars seemed like gigantic pages drowsing on the banks of the silvery highway which winds across this garden of "the Sleeping Beauty". One heard only the song of the larks—studs of gold in the sky of France—and the low heavy bass of the cannon, which, to-day, have not ceased thundering.

At one o'clock, we set out for exercise. It is very warm. We first file along the side of a hill, then pass over its crest, and enter a wood, where we halt. It is there that I have gathered the periwinkles and anemones enclosed. The periwinkles have made me think of Morija;* thou wilt recall the alley which leads from the terrace of the *Maisoo Mabille* to the little gate under the eucalyptus! Poor mission! I often think of Francis

*His mission-birthplace in the country of the Basuto, S. Africa.

Monod. Could you send me the *Journal des Missions?* Could my father also write a note to our chaplain to tell him where I am?

Could Renée (his sister) send me the words of the "Requiem" of Stevenson? I love it so much, especially the music, that I should like to try to translate it. Do not be surprised if my style and ideas are *flowery*. In order to write I am resting my hand on my *bidon* (canteen). However, for three days it has contained nothing but milk!

April 16. We expected to depart last night, and—for a change—we are *here still!* As usual, the day is splendid, the temperature ideal. We hear no more the cannon of Verdun; but it must be added that the wind comes now from the west. All is perfectly quiet, except that the autos and trucks go on, almost without intermission. There are, also, all the time, express messengers going and coming. Finally, we have been warned that we are in "a cantonment on the alert" until further orders.

This afternoon, bayonet-practice. As

there were two corporals lacking, R. and I—the two "blues" of the squad—had to replace them as monitors. Can you imagine us keeping at work a crew of old beginners of at least forty years of age? Finally, for the second part, we have had games on the programme. It was an amazing spectacle to see these soldiers, many of whom are Territorials, running after each other and amusing themselves like schoolboys!

We sleep all night, and sometimes during the day. We eat at all hours, whenever there happens to be something to eat. We do fatigue work when it is our turn. Thus, this morning I began by sweeping the road in front of the police-post, and cleaning the approaches to the said post, after which I have collected the old bones, preserve-boxes, fragments of bread and paper, which were wandering about the cantonment. We pass in review; we go to drill.

SUNDAY, APRIL 15. I should have liked to be able to attend a Church service to-day, for surely there must have been one in some part

of the sector. But I could not discover one. Besides, it would not have been of any use, for we may be called to turn out at any hour of day or night, and without previous warning. Consequently the men cannot be farther from the cantonment than 500 metres.

I confess that this long rest begins to weigh upon my mind, and that I should much like to be doing something! So much the more since I hear anew the cannon of Verdun, and it is horrible to think that, while one is here doing nothing, there are others so near, being slain!

More and more, in the face of those who have struggled and fallen, I think of the France of to-morrow—of the consecrated France, which *ought to be!* I could not fight if I did not hope for the birth of that France, which, in itself, will be worthy that men should kill and die for her sake!

I am trying to profit by these days of rest; to prepare myself yet more thoroughly. I have time to read and meditate. In the morning I try to escape to the hill-sides, to

pray, and at eventide I go to collect my thoughts in some church to which a few soldiers find their way.

If you could know how greatly I regret what I have not been able to be and to do for my Sunday scholars, my "Scouts," my friends! My heart is quite full of things that I should have liked to say to those who suffer, who weep, who wait, who hope! For myself the military life simplifies everything. Things have assumed their true value; their full significance. Difficulties which seemed almost insurmountable have disappeared. Intellectual sacrifices to which I believed I never should be able to consent have brought themselves about without pain. And there remains with me a new vitality—a need of intense action. And then—*always peace!*

Nevertheless, I am afraid of this peace, for myself and those I love, because, too often, it is merely *human*. By that I mean weakness, resignation, instead of feeling the conscience filled with a certain duty, and a real strength. And I often pray for myself and

for those I love, that our souls should be *truly alive*,—that the peace of Christ may descend upon us, not as the snow that brings slumber and death, but as the warmth of the sun, which vitalizes the seed underground. Lord, may *Thy* Peace be with us—*Thy* Peace—not the peace of men!

April 15. On the scanty grass behind our barn, in the shade of the plum tree, not yet in blossom, about thirty men are lying prone —some on their backs, with their *képis* over their eyes. Almost all are asleep. I alone am writing. If there were not a delicious little breeze from the north-west, one might have congestion of the brain, as my neighbour Corporal A. declares. Those who are not here are snoring their best in the stables; and some philosophers are fishing on the banks of the stream, a place to dream of! Unhappily, it is 200 metres distant from the cantonment; and if one should fall asleep, and let the hour for drill pass by, nobody would go to rouse one. That would mean—eight days in prison! In parenthesis—the

"prison" is a thing quite original. Normally, the prisons are situated at the police-posts, located somewhere in the cantonment. But as they are numerous at this time—*"on account of wine,"* the prisoners are "confined" —in a square traced by the bayonet on the ground, by the chief of police. At the four corners of this original "cell," in place of sentinels with bayonet or gun, there is a corporal styled Chief-guard. This said, I return to my stream. It passes through the middle of the meadows, and is bordered, sometimes by bushes and reeds, sometimes by tolerably tall trees; there it is truly pleasant to be, to make one's toilette. It is very picturesque to see the soldiers lying on the verdure of the meadows. You would scarcely expect such remarks from a warrior! But we do nothing here but eat, sleep, go to drill, read and write!

April 22. To a Band of Scouts—"Eclaireurs"—that he had Formed at Montauban. My dear Friends: From the front, where I often think of you, I send you a message of affectionate encouragement.

You have before you a splendid task! Your fathers, your brothers, your friends have been fighting—and are fighting still—to defend the soil of France, and above all to win the victory of the French spirit which loves righteousness, justice, liberty. They shall triumph outwardly: it is for you to see that it becomes the animating spirit of our whole country, that each Frenchman may have but one ideal—to bring about the reign of Justice!

In looking on the graves of our soldiers, I repeat to myself these words: "Then have they counted not their lives dear unto them." French translation—"they have not feared death." When they were called "To the assault!" they have seen the foe shoulder to shoulder at the loop-holes of the trench, ready to shoot surely and at sight;—and they have mounted without hesitation. Many of them have fallen—the rest have conquered!

The duty that meets *you*—is to *live*. Not as plants or animals, that let themselves live,

but as men who have one end in their life, and strive to attain it. Your elders have not feared *death;*—do not fear *life*. To *live*—for *you*—means the most effective and the most vigorous life possible to you;—to be as straight, as loyal, as devoted to others, as pure as possible. That means—to accomplish each day, not *one* good action merely, but *invariably* good actions. That means, in fine, to be true "Scouts"—"Light-bearers"—persons who light others on their way, by showing them how it is necessary to live, and how one may find the strength to live well.

If you accept this ideal, your elders will not have suffered in vain, and you will have the right to "enter the career" to "follow on" in your turn. Let your motto then be, "Faithful unto death." *Until death*—that is to say,—during our whole life, we shall remain faithful to Him Who has shown what can and should be a man's life; we shall remain faithful to Christ—the Great Light-bearer. I wish you all the power thus to live!

Your friend and brother Eclaireur.

April 25. On Thursday morning—rising at 3.30—we depart at 5.30. The weather is exquisite and we march without fatigue, but the day promises to be very warm. In fact, the heat—slight at first—increases by degrees, and the dust grows denser. But there is a light, fresh wind, coming from one side, which drives away the dust. As I march on the edge of the column, I do not get any.

We make few halts—five minutes each hour, and we march relatively fast, allowance being made for stations clogged with encumbered crossings. We cross many villages and little destroyed towns—Vaubecourt, Rambecourt, etc. At length, towards one o'clock, we reach Laimont, having made about thirty kilometres. We are quartered in a barn, and we rest that night and the following.

On Friday evening, we depart at 8.30 and march four kilometres, to entrain at Révigny, in cattle-cars; each contains 44 men. There is room for only 40 at most. Each man has, for a seat, only the surface of his kit, placed

on the floor, and one sleeps with his head rested on his knees, which is not very comfortable. The night was relatively quiet.

Little by little we approach Paris, and soon one perceives the Eiffel tower, despite the mist. We stop at the station of Noisy-le-Sec,* and remain there thirty minutes. Then we set off again by Creil, towards the north.

The hours pass very slowly. Happily I have some good reading. We are installed for the night. But at nine o'clock a sudden rousing comes. We must jump from the train, equip ourselves quickly, and form up on the *quai.* Then we depart in the darkness. A fine, cold rain is falling, which wets us through. On nearing the village of *Argicourt, in the Somme,* we hear the cannon very near: we even see the flash of the explosion.

The first two villages where we stop to find quarters are already full of soldiers. We have to set out again, under the rain. Like

*Referring to this stoppage at Noisy-le-Sec, he said to another correspondent, "At eleven kilometres from *home!* You can understand that I felt my heart swell a little!"

modern Wandering Jews, grumbling at damp and fatigue,—having just passed twenty-three hours in the train—we seek village after village. Everywhere there are already soldiers, and there is no more room!

At last we find a cantonment, and there is fresh straw in abundance. But it is four o'clock in the morning, and we had marched since nine, almost without halting and in the rain! Bunches of men had stopped on the road, having neither strength nor courage to go farther. I do not know how I managed to reach the end. Fatigued by the train, hungry, my shoulders hurt by the tight straps of my kit, I said to myself many times, "I give in here!" And still I have succeeded in holding on to the end! But as soon as—unshod and undressed—I had rolled myself in my blanket, I forthwith fell sound asleep.

On Sunday morning, we were not up till noon, and as soon as we had swallowed our soup, we set to work to dry our soaked possessions, to carefully clean our arms, and to install the cantonment. Finally evening has

come, without my having had more than five minutes' rest, during which I made, somewhat hurriedly, my private devotions. Yesterday, as a contrast, I had a very quiet day, for reading to myself and others. In the afternoon, I was summoned to Commandant Charles Schmuckel. He proposes to take me into the 1st Battalion, and—since this morning—I am attached to the 4th Company. The new battalion is the most famous one of the —— Army. The Commandant is much loved because he is very just and always ready to render a service. He is a man of courage and devoted to duty. He has proved this in conducting his men to the assault of the S. K. trench at Perthes, with a generalship which has brought to the battalion the honour of being mentioned in the Order of the day, and being decorated with the *Croix-de-Guerre*.

We are in reserve, and very closely confined in our cantonments. It is feared that we might be marked by the enemy airplanes; and, as soon as one of them is signalled, we

are warned by three blasts of the trumpet, when every one must then seek shelter. We are always awaiting the call for a sudden stroke.

April 23. I have nothing to tell you. My life is empty, made up of petty exercises, and chiefly of *rest!* But it is that in appearance only. I feel myself living ardently,—intensely. Never had I lived with such acuteness as now. I feel in myself such stirring up of sentiments and ideas, that certainly I shall not hereafter be the same as before.

My chief preoccupation is that of the rightness of this war. I am confident that our cause is just and good, and that we have the Right on our side. But it is necessary that this war shall be fruitful; that from all these deaths shall spring forth a new era for humanity.—I think ceaselessly of the France of to-morrow—of that young France whose hour is at hand. It must assuredly be a consecrated France, in which all will have but one purpose in living,—that of *Duty!* They shall live only in so far as each shall know

his duty, and shall strive to fulfil it. And it is to us, Protestants—or rather "believers"—that it belongs to reveal this new life to the world.

The duty before us is to be apostles. It is clear.—Jesus has defined it:—"Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." Perfect,—in *ourselves*:—that means developing our personality to its best, to make it give out all that it can—to press on towards the perfect stature of Christ. And then—perfect in *others;*—for do we not believe, with all our hearts, in "the communion of saints," which means that we pray for them, that we seek to bend their consciences, and their wills, to *the royal will of God!*

April 27. You cannot realize the intensity of my present life during these hours of rest—blessed hours of my life, in which *systematic* work, fixed in formulas and traditional moulds, has been replaced by the free development of my soul.

I had often dreamed of this hour, in which I should enter into *reality*. But I did not be-

lieve that it would come so soon. And now I profoundly rejoice in it.

The only thing I regret is not having enough time to co-ordinate my thoughts. That will come naturally, by degrees, and the connection between my ideas will then be vital, organic,—no longer artificial! Pray for me and ask God that I may have the patience greatly needed at this moment to await the hour of going into battle, and to *await it rightly!*

April 28. This afternoon the *Fête* of the Company took place, with songs, choruses, monologues, etc. They have decorated a pretty little "scene" with pine-branches, and there are, I believe, some good speakers. But we are not allowed to go, unless we start all together, in column of fours. Those who were not ready for this must remain in the cantonment, and that is my lot! I had just shouldered my kit, and was trying to steady it with the last strap, when the whole thing was suddenly left in my hands, the fastenings of the straps having given way at once

with entire completeness! I had to repair the damage, and it took too much time to be ready at the hour appointed.

I have found here my comrade D, which is very pleasant. He is a very fine lad, originally from Tahiti, and a former pupil at the High School of Bordeaux. He knows very well the Missionaries, Moreau and Vernier.

April 29. It is infinitely sweet, at times such as this, to feel that there are others about us, and behind us, who have the same ideal purpose with ourselves—the same "March towards the Star." Others than we, if we should fall, shall labour at the great work of the conquest of the world for its King—*our* King. Others shall raise aloft the torch that we had dreamed of carrying before us.

Others? But I have too much faith in life and its significance to stop at this hypothesis. I do not wish to prepare myself for death, but for *life*. For life eternal—doubtless; but more immediately for life terrestrial. Certainly, when I shall return, I must be

changed—as all are. I shall have no longer the right to be what I was before; otherwise, what use would this war have been to me? Have we not the faith that it ought to renew humanity? And should it not renew *us,*— among the first?

And, to begin with, it seems to me that we should develop and infinitely enlarge the notion of our ministry. *Pastors?*—yes, certainly! I use the term in the sense in which it is currently used—that is to say, directors, preachers, and counsellors of a parish. We should be such, and missionaries also. But we ought to be more than that—to-day! We should be *men,*— more than that—*apostles!* We should throw light far beyond our immediate circle; group around us all the *"men of good-will;"* Still more—strive that each will with which we come in contact in others should become a *good will!*

There will be—at first—our preaching to alter. All in it that is empty formula, however fine it be—all that is empty formula to-day, because our philosophic or religious

thought, or our experience, has left it such—should disappear. And what we shall put in its place shall not be less grand or less beautiful, or less true, if we seek for it in the depth of our souls united to God. And that will not be the less Christian, because the spirit of Christ is a living spirit, which develops itself and is not fixed in an always identical form.

Our care of souls should redouble itself in the care of the young. Undoubtedly we should speak always and unwearily, of consolation and hope. But our Church should not become the refuge of vain despair and of the vanquished: it must speak chiefly of *life*, which sums itself up in one word—*Duty*. Entire consecration to whole-hearted duty—that is what the new human life should be!

(It has just been announced that we start this evening—whither,—I know not. I am obliged, therefore, to shorten my letter. Probably we are going near the firing line. — —) Finally, rest in prayer! We have already spoken of it, but the subject is inexhaustible!

I do not return to the prayer of *intercession* for others:—that they may learn to submit their will to the will of the Father's infinite love, and that the vision of a duty to accomplish may in them be clearer and more living. — — There is—moreover—the prayer for *ourselves*. We ought to pray, in order to be pardoned. Pardon is in the first place the destruction of habits--of associations of ideas that form themselves in us, in order to *paralyze us*. To sum up,—we should ask of God unceasingly, our *freedom*.—There is more than this in pardon—to believe that God is Love implies that He can suffer, and suffer effectively for our failures, as He rejoices in our joys and our success. Compare many of the words of Jesus. It should humiliate us to cause *Him* suffering, and we should be sharers therein.

We ask strength from God. Remember the words addressed to Gideon: "Go with the strength thou *hast*." This is surely true for us also. We are strong, but we are ignorant of it—often willingly so! We are afraid of

the strength within us, for, if we should use it as we ought, it might take us where we do not wish to go! Let us ask of our Father that we may know this strength, and learn to use it so as to render to Him the utmost that we can! Forgive my stopping here. I must stop to buckle on my kit for immediate departure.

April 30. We started from Epagny at 8.15 p.m., to go to take the train. We were more comfortable than on the preceding move—forty men only to each car, and straw on the floor. We made an immense curve towards the coast; then returned towards the interior. Leaving the train at nine o'clock, we were piled into automobile trucks. We were thirty to the vehicle, and we were packed like anchovies. The heat absolutely tropical, and overpowering dust. Perspiration moistened our faces, so that the dust stuck; and when we were marching afterwards the transpiration traced on them splendid marblings. We were truly picturesque!

After twenty-five kilometres (15½ miles) by motors, we proceeded on foot, at midday, and have made a march of some hours only, but it was fatiguing, because of the heat and the dust. We have been quartered here (Arras), and sleep here to-night in the open air. We are completely at the Front. There is nothing before us but the trenches, at the distance of eight kilometres, and—behind us—the soldiers in rest, and the artillery firing above our heads. Our *aeros fly in every sense,* and the Germans cannonade them.

May 1. Picture to yourself that we have had this morning a baptism of fire. Oh! it was not very serious, this time; but—it is the beginning. On all sides we are surrounded with artillery. Already—yesterday noon—these pieces delivered fire, but at the beginning of the night they introduced the "*grande valse,*" which burst forth from all sides, and I assure you that we hear the explosions well. *That* went on until morning. Then the explosions grew rarer—one here and there, from time to time. But at nine o'clock, great

pieces, placed on our right, quite close to us, have opened fire by salvoes, to which the Germans did not delay to respond.

Indeed, at the moment when the soup had just been served (10.15) I heard, in the air, towards the left, a noise like that of a locomotive mounting rapidly a somewhat rough slope, with sounds very short and close together. Instinctively I raised my head to see the object pass, and—naturally shrank aside! Two seconds later—a frightful noise. It is a marmite of 105, it seems, which has burst 300 metres from us. We watch the smoke.—They must have aimed at the artillery.

Some minutes after—another engine,—this time nearer. On its explosion,—a tableau! One could have believed himself in an Arab camp at the moment of prayer, and the little tents around bore out the illusion. Instantly almost all the men had fallen—face to the ground, for the most part lying flat or crouching as low as possible. For an instant no one moves, and I hear a slow, soft whistling,—*pfiiiou!*——then a dull shock—*paf!* It

is a high explosive which has just struck the tree against which I am leaning, at about five metres above the ground.

Then everybody rises, and the few who had remained upright show us where the explosion struck,—where the shell had fallen. This time, it seems, it was nearer, by less than two hundred metres.—The firing resembles barrage volleys,—the shells falling like a scythe-stroke, as if sweeping a wide space. So, when we hear a new one coming, it is a general "*carapace*" (—cowering, tortoise-shell fashion.) But the attack has returned towards the left. Evidently it is the artillery at which they are aiming, and they cannot be aware that two companies are cantonned so near them, so, when two others come, everybody remains up, and we go on calmly eating our lunch. After long silence, our 155s reply more briskly. Since then, the firing has not ceased. There has been at least one discharge every two minutes, sometimes salvoes of three, four or five successive shots.

Otherwise all goes well, and I have had an excellent *siesta*. Now I have just touched two dozen packages of cartouches, which makes for me, in all, two hundred "*plums*." This evening we go, without doubt, to make a "*relief*" at the trenches.

MAY 2. Behold me in these famous trenches! Last evening, at 8.30, we assembled before the cantonment—kit on back—each carrying a plate or a pannikin in his hand. We departed in the strictest silence. The artillery, at this moment, was silent, and there was no light save that of the rockets, briskly thrown, at intervals, by the Germans or by us, and the electric lanterns of the officers. It was truly impressive—this march of the whole battalion by night.

After having crossed a destroyed village, we entered into the *boyan* (passage)—cut out of the clay,—it suffices to conceal us completely. In proportion as we approach the trench properly so called, the noise of the fusillade grows more distinct, and soon some balls begin to whistle around us. Instinct-

ively one lowers his head! After more than an hour in the "*boyau,*" we have reached the trench, and relieved the regiment that occupied it. We have very comfortable sleeping-chambers, cut in the wall of the trench. There are inscriptions—"Attention—Turning dangerous!" "Take care of the women and children!" "Carriage-way to the Germans!" "Climb up the opposite bank and walk straight ahead," etc.

Naturally the first moments spent in the trenches are exciting enough. On all sides balls whistle; shells and bombs rush past. But one gets quickly used to it, and at the end of an hour makes no more blunders. There is something amusing in the diversity of sounds one hears in the trenches—the German detonations—dry, sharp, vibrating; ours more dull; those of the different guns, mitrailleuses, lance-bombs; the variety of noises made by the shells in passing and exploding; the sound of the balls touching a hard object; the rockets, aero-motors, and finally, the song of the *larks;*—for they sing,

—as if there were nothing the matter,—in the fields, between the trenches, where the young corn is already growing high!

I cannot tell you how close to me I feel you—my mother and thee—and how sweet that is to me!

ROCLINCOURT. MAY 3. Towards 9 last evening the — Company has come to relieve us, and we are now quartered in the village of Roclincourt, or at least what remains of that village! We lodge in a house which has more windows than the architects had made for it —thanks to the shells. We sleep on the straw, pell-mell, with the squeaking rats.

This morning I was sleeping peacefully, when I was called up, along with another soldier named D———. The lieutenant has named us "*artilleurs.*" D——— is *pointeur,* while I am to serve the gun, of 37 m-m, which fires very pretty little percussion-shells. The creature is lodged quite in the first line, in a covered gun-pit. When it is not in use, one can conceal *the embrasure* with sand-bags. It is useful, for the Germans aim and fire

well. This morning, when we were making our trial-shots, several balls struck just on the side of the embrasure. But it is a post of trust.

MAY 4. There are several experiences that I rejoice to be able to have at this time. First—the experience of *men.* In hours when, at every moment, they are risking their lives, they show what they are, not having any longer the thought of pretension of either good or evil. All that was in them of mere *acquirement,* or pretence—all *that* disappears, and *the man* alone remains. Thus one makes acquaintance with *souls,* under conditions which—doubtless—will never occur again! Next—the experience of the "Communion of Saints." I never, at any time, felt so near to *my own* people, and to those whom I love! Never should I have believed that, in spite of distance, we should be so united—as near as to those who are fighting with us. This is true also of certain friends in particular—* "Volunteers," and of those

*Members of a Christian "brotherhood."

who, without being "Volunteers," have equally answered—"I am here, Lord—send me." And it is this which leads me to the best of the three experiences—to the unique and marvellous power of prayer!

Do you not think that—formerly—our Monday prayer-meetings may have been cold because we *made* prayers, instead of praying?

MAY 5. It seems that we are going up to the trenches this evening. I am not sorry,—for *there*—at least—*something* is *done!* The duel of artillery is still going on above our heads, but one no longer pays any attention to it.

MAY 5. Our village is pretty close to the centre of the firing-zone of the two artilleries. Since noon, yesterday, the bombardment is pretty violent; but it is nothing as yet! When the preparation for the attack shall begin, we shall see something very different! Moreover, one soon grows accustomed to all these noises, and does not pay the same attention to them as—at first—when we lowered our

heads and raised our shoulders at every detonation or whistle that seemed somewhat near!

You hope that this experience will profit me much. Thank you. I feel myself already changing. The abstract being that was in me seems gradually falling away. Many realities of the spiritual order—formerly mere phantoms—are becoming flesh and blood for me, through an experience renewed every moment.—I am learning to *live!*

But a serious hour is at hand. To-morrow—or the day after to-morrow—we shall go to the attack. It will be necessary to mount *"à la baionnette,"* and the assault will be a terrible one, because it is not only *one* trench which must be carried, but an advance of several kilometres is expected to be made. If I fall, know that I shall have died without fear and in peace! I ask but one thing: it is that the small degree of consecrated force which has lived in me may be renewed in all whom I have loved—in all my companions in ideal and in labour.

MAY 6. I am in good health and I embrace you all!

His *last* letter—written on a post-card, and found unfinished in the pocket of his capote, at his interment.

MAY 8. Since Thursday evening, I have returned to the trench, knowing that the great attack was imminent. Since that day my life has been an anxious and painful waiting for the coming hour: but I am at peace; I fear nothing; I shall know how to do my duty—with the help of God.

The bombardment is becoming more and more violent. To-day, especially, the artillery is firing unceasingly, and one hears nothing but the noise of the shells. They whistle in the air outside the trench, and one would call it a great heart-rending sob; then they explode below, with a sharp noise, and everything flies—earth, wood, iron; in fact this is the way of all explosions which reach us and fall on all sides. And to think that this is scarcely the fiftieth part of the artillery firing around us! What will it be when

all of them shall thunder at once? I have good hope. The assault cannot fail of success! There will be wounded, the slain; but we shall go forward and far! . . . .

[A brief record adds: "At ten o'clock precisely, certain Companies of the 1st Battalion sallied from the trenches of Roclincourt. Some seconds later—charging by the side of his lieutenant—our *'petit soldat'* fell, no more to rise!"]

His body was not found till after a search a day or two later. After his interment, his gallant Commandant—himself killed in action a few days later—wrote thus to his bereaved parents: "Our dear battalion—already mentioned in the Order of the Army—has fought heroically and dearly paid its debt! As a parent, as a friend, as a Chief, I mourn for all my dear little soldiers, but above all—for *yours,* who had prayed with me on the previous evening."

His parents add that "the *elan* which carried him to the assault was not broken by the ball which laid his body on the ground. Our 'little soldier' continued his course, and with one bound entered into the Paradise of God, where he finished his *'Marche a l'etoile.'* "

After the battle was over, and the bodies of the fallen had been recovered and devoutly interred, there was found in the pocket of Alfred Casalis, the following "Will and Testament," dated on the fifth of May previous:

"Be assured that at the moment of departure,

looking steadfastly within myself, I believe that I can say, without pride, but also without false shame, —'I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,' and I would that all my friends—all those who are living every moment with me, and whose hearts beat in unison with mine, should repeat the word of hope—*'Because I live, ye shall live also.'."*—Signed, A. E. Casalis.

It seems only right and fitting to couple with this touching "Testament," that which—two years later —the "eldest brother," before-mentioned—as being a brigadier in a squadron of dragoons,—who like himself had been destined for a Missionary (medical) career, left on another battle-field as his last message to his family and friends:

"If, one day, you shall read this, it will be that I shall have left this world and given (I also) my life to the just cause that we are defending. Know that I shall have died happy, and proud of having fought for you whom I so much love, and especially for the little children, that they may not witness the horrors we have seen, and that they may be able to live on an earth on which there shall no more be anything but love, charity and justice. Thanks for the joy and the happiness that you have given me, and—above all—for having led me to know the only true source of all happiness,—in our Saviour, Jesus Christ.—Andre Alfred Casalis." (Died Aug. 20, 1918.)

SUPPLEMENTARY

FOR the following fragmentary glimpses of young soldiers of France, perhaps less widely known, but most fitting to be appended as an appropriate supplement to the two previous series of consecutive letters of André Cornet-Auquier and Eugené Alfred Casalis, the present editor, is indebted to a most appreciative article from the able pen of M. Des Barrès, which appeared in the Atlantic Monthly Magazine during the summer of 1917, and ha sbeen widely read and enjoyed. His own translations from their letters appear here in quotation marks.

Leo Latil, on whose experiences he dwells perhaps with the greater sympathy, because he is evidently a poet by gift of Nature, and was a true lover of natural beauty, was a son of Southern France,—the land of beauty, poetry and romance, his father

being a doctor in Aix-en-Provence. He fought as a sergeant in the 67th Infantry, joining the army at the outbreak of war, and dying for France in September of the following year, at the age of twenty-four. The young Provençal, sensitive to all natural beauty, had been studying for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, under Maurice Blondel, famous as the author of "*Action*." As he makes his way north, along the valley of the Meuse, the charm of the luxuriant beauty around him and the peaceful solitudes of the woodlands by the river, seem to carry his mind away, for the time being, from the cloud of war and anguish so darkly overhanging his country. From the hills and groves so familiar to his country's heroine, Joan of Arc, he writes in poetic rapture:—

"What charming hill-sides, what noble rivers! Truly, this country of France is worth fighting for! A wooded slope, terraced with three lines of trenches; opposite, across the valley, '*they*' are in possession. What a

glorious countryside! in all France nothing lovelier! If you only knew what good friends to soldiers the woods are! Under their protection, one may venture forth from dug-outs and bomb-proofs; one may bathe in living springs. *Taubes* see nothing! One drawback only! These ugly brutes across the valley climb stealthily up the trees and snipe at us.

"The one thought that helps me through all trials is—that we are spending every moment close to Nature, and growing to know her as no mere civilian could ever hope to do. One evening, when the little schoolmaster and I had come back late, and every scrap of room in the bunk-house was taken, we flung ourselves down side by side, at the foot of a big beech. Scarcely a moment before the rain began to murmur beneath the leaves! The great tree had not been able to protect us! But then, I thought—what harm can come to us from this Nature, which has been so friendly? Another evening, in a lonely dell, I heard a nightingale singing so won-

drously that its voice held me silent for a long, long time. I have learned the secrets of every hour of the day and night. In these Meuse woods, which I call *my* woods, I have seen every little leaf born, every copse turn green anew. They shelter me and protect me, when the crisis is at hand!

"The moonlight is magnificent. I have slept like a shepherd on a couch of dead leaves, in spite of the 75s which are clattering away behind us. I am determined to set free these hill-sides, these tree-tops waving rhythmically behind the enemy's trenches."

"For such as he," it has been well said, in the sympathetic tribute by M. Barrès, "there exists no imaginary conflict between the cult of Nature and heroic Christianity. Self-immolation, the spirit of sacrifice, have seemed to us irreconcilable with this enchantress. How easily he subordinates great Pan to the Son of God crucified! The beauty of the skies, the forests, the rivers of France,—furnishes him with just so many incentives to the fulfilment of his duty—as strong in him

as in Casalis and Cornet-Auquier, as we see in these glimpses of his soldier life."

"All my best wishes to you! After all, the *poilu* is not indestructible, and care must be taken to replace him. Then, too, it is good to think we are fighting for all these little children, who shall have free and peaceful lives.

"I wish you could have seen the procession of *poilus* coming back from the trenches to the rear. Heavily bearded they are, and long-haired,—caked with mud, plodding along on their sticks, and carrying on their backs a strange collection of bedding, tools, and camp-dishes. One might think that all the beggars and the luckless from all parts of the world were filing past; but their spirit is so splendid that we always feel like cheering them!

"I am now serving my apprenticeship as sergeant. Nothing difficult about it, but one must keep one's mind on a hundred little things, and, withal, never forget to be *just!* One must know how to demand a great deal, to have authority, and to acquire still more,

without losing the human touch. One must be able to hearten one's men and console them. All this can be acquired, and is well worth trying for.

"Do not pray that I may be spared suffering. Pray rather that I may be able to bear it, and that the courage I long for may be given me."

While still in Lorraine, during the last September he was to know,—a month especially lovely *there*,—he gives a charming idyllic picture of a farewell reunion.

"If you could only have seen our leave-taking evening! The kitchen of a country inn—a great Lorraine kitchen, clean as could be, with a roaring blaze in the great fireplace. Already day was drawing her veil about her, and the night mists were rising from the marsh-lands. The table was loaded with bottles of wine, which the proprietor had brought up. We stood around, leaning on our rifles;—the two little girls, over in the corner, were sobbing as if their hearts would break. Even the old man himself was

upset. As for us, we were cracking jokes; I swaggered about, with my American pipe between my teeth. Once more, for the last time we drank each other's health and kissed cheeks wet with tears. Then we filed out into the darkness, dragging our gun-stocks over the floor. It was all like some quaint old picture of one of those moments of poetry or legend which you might think could exist only in books."

Here is another vivid picture, as charming in its way.

"We were in an orchard lying at ease, awaiting orders. I had forbidden my men to pick any of the plums; they could only gather up the windfalls lying in the grass. The little boys of the village, however, who were always trailing along behind us, swarmed up the trees and shook them. What a downpour of plums—and how good they were!"

"Sometimes," he writes, in graver vein, from his inmost heart,—"I find myself pursuing a dream: but for the most part I am

one with my men, living their life, with my whole heart. They are such splendid fellows, —so many of them! And besides, I love this solitude with its tang of bitterness, these ceaseless mortifications of the flesh, these moods of the purified soul, ever ready for prayer. Our sacrifices will be sweet, if we win a great and glorious victory,—if there shall be more light for the souls of men; if Truth shall come forth more radiant, better beloved! We must not forget, for a moment, that we are fighting for great things—for the *very greatest things!* In every sense this victory of ours will be a victory of the forces of idealism!"

Like his fellows in this sketch, he was not destined to see the fulness of victory that he longed for. A few weeks after the completion of the first year of the war, he fell in Champagne, at the edge of a German trench, as he was leading a section of his regiment, taking the place of its lieutenant, who had just met the hero's death, which quickly overtook himself.

JEAN RIVAL

JEAN RIVAL, the son of a doctor at Grenoble, was, at nineteen years of age, an *aspirant* or cadet in the 14th Battalion of Chasseurs, when called to take an active part in the defence of his country. In leaving his home for the front, he thus opened his true and loving heart to the "young kinswoman" who was his especial *confidante*.

"I feel within me such an intensity of life, such a need of loving and being loved, of unfolding, of admiring, of drawing great joyous breaths, that I cannot believe that death will lay hands upon me! And yet I know that commanding a section is deadly perilous. To lead soldiers to battle is to make oneself a target. Many have fallen; many more will yet fall! I have just learned of the death of several comrades who came to the front only

a short while ago, as *aspirants*. If this should be my lot, I count on *you,* dear J——, to console my parents. You must tell them that I died facing the enemy, protecting France with my body; and that they did not bring their son to his twentieth year in vain, since they have given our country one more defender. Tell them that my blood has not flowed for nothing, and that the countless tragic sacrifices of individual lives will save the life of France!"

And from the "terrible sector of the *Tête de Faux,*" he writes, in the same spirit, to his younger brother at home: "My greatest comfort in the difficult moments which I must endure here—is to think that you, my little brothers and sisters, are all doing your duty as I am. My duty is to fight like a brave soldier—yours, to work just as courageously. Small and unimportant as you may seem to be, in this great France of ours, you owe it to yourself to make yourself bigger, richer, nobler. After the war France will sorely need intelligent minds and strong arms; and you,

the boys of to-day, will be the young manhood of to-morrow. You will be called on, *then,* to take the place of a soldier who has died for our country!"

Some of the "difficult moments" he thus describes in another letter. "We are within thirty or forty metres of the Boches. One can only move about in deep, narrow trenches filled with mud and puddles of water, separated by big stones, which give way under one's feet. A single shot may presage an attack. All night long I go the rounds, and when day comes I must oversee the trench-works, so that I have not a moment to myself. I can hardly snatch a bit of sleep on damp straw in a dug-out which I must enter on all fours. Nevertheless, *our spirits are of the best!*

"I am in command of a platoon—that is, two sections,—my own and that of the Adjutant, who has a shell wound. The responsibility is considerable; but little by little one gets used to it. Only the 'reliefs' are troublesome. You start off about midnight, follow,

through the black shadows of the pines, a path filled with stones and slippery with sleet, keep dead silence, fall down, get up again; lose your way, find it once more, and, having ultimately arrived at your destination, station the sentries, send the men to bed, spot the trenches where the fighting is going on, in case of an attack; then finally fling yourself down on the straw,—revolver in hand—*that* is what a '*relief*' is!"

Yet, with all these experiences, the stout-hearted lad objects to being pitied or having influence used to make things easier. "That is too bad," he says to his parents. "Let M. go about her own business and keep calm! And why do you always call me—'*poor* Jean?' We have no liking to be pitied that way. Say—'my dear Jean,' or 'good old Jean,' or 'little Jean'; but why '*poor?*' Is it because I am doing my duty,—like all my comrades?"

In the same circumstances, he sends a bright Easter message—a gleam of sunshine from *within*. It is Easter Sunday 1915.—

"Happy Easter, Happy Easter! You must excuse this poor little letter. I am no longer in the rest-camp, but in the first line trenches, in a gloomy dug-out where the rain beats in, and I can't stand up straight. I have the command of two sections now, so there is plenty to do. Still I have time to tell you that all goes well; that I love you; and that I am happy with my lot. *Happy Easter!*"

Still, from the "land of Alsace," which he "loved as dearly as his own Dauphiny," he writes to his trusty *confidante*: "Dear J— How can I thank you for all the good you do me, with those letters of yours, so full of warm, cheering words, sweet as those of the elder sister I always longed for, and whom I find in you! What am I to do, to prove myself grateful? Fight bravely, to spare you the loathsome touch of those barbarians, whom we have been holding back here—one battalion against two—for a month and a half? On the day of the attack, dear J—— at the supreme moment when, at the signal of my captain, I shall go up and over the

ramparts with my men, shouting *'En avant, à la baionnette!'*—At that supremely tragic moment when one stakes one's life, I shall think of you—rest assured of it! 'Forward, boys, forward! At them with the bayonet, for our sisters,—the women of France!"

But with all this tender and noble enthusiasm, he is able to reason calmly in what we may call his stock-taking of the feeling and spirit and needs of the soldiers in action, in words well worthy of thoughtful attention.

"If," he says, in a familiar letter, "taking things at large, one may find here [at the *Front*] a sane and noble spirit,—it is utterly different from that which exists in the barracks and behind the lines,—a spirit of unconsciousness and fatalism in some, of sober courage in others, and of cold resignation in others still. For my part, I have always believed in the necessity of the 'chosen few,' but of a chosen few truly worthy of the same, possessed by *a sense of duty*, influencing and educating the masses. The chosen few, at the present moment, are brave and firm of

purpose. *They* are the leaders in the war, and it is *they* who will lead it triumphantly to a close; for the masses are, in general, long-suffering, enduring, and easily stirred to glorious strife. The officer holds in his hand a mighty implement. If only he is a good workman—that is, if he passionately loves his profession and his country—be sure that he will turn out a work of art!"

In other letters he mentions how deeply touched he had been in witnessing a village First Communion; and, while warning his family against over-anxiety about him, and counselling calmness of soul, he also expresses his gratitude for the small remittances sent to him, along with his fear lest they can ill be spared from home needs. And to his father, he affectionately says, in a letter written to him on his birthday:—"You may be sure that I understand the feelings of a father who sees his son of twenty years, whom he has reared at the cost of so much toil and care and thrift,—setting out for the great Unknown of War!"

In July, 1915, his last letter—his "swan-song"—is written to his faithful young *confidante;* and he evidently felt it was to be a preparation for an end so long dreaded by his affectionate home circle.

"Dear J—— To-morrow at dawn, to the strains of Sidi Brahim and the *Marseillaise,* we shall charge the German lines. The attack will probably finish me. On the evening before this great day, which may be my last, I remind you of your promise. Keep up my mother's courage. For a week or two she will receive no news. Tell her that when an advance is at hand, no soldier can write to his loved ones: he must content himself with thinking about them. And if the time goes by, and she hears nothing of me, let her live in hope; keep up her courage. Then, if you hear at last that I have fallen on the field of Honour, let your heart speak those words that will bring her solace.

"This morning I attended Mass and took Communion a few metres back of the trenches. If I die, I shall die as a Christian and a Frenchman.

"I believe in God, in France, in Victory. I believe in beauty, youth, and life! God guard me to the very end! But if my blood is needed for our triumph—Thy Will be done, O Lord!"

Such words as these have well been called, by a French writer, "the diadem of France—the glory of the country; for in them there is not the least preoccupation with "glory"—no wish except to do *that which is right!*

The attack on La Liege, we are told, began on July 20, 1915, about eleven o'clock. At one o'clock Jean Rival fell dead with a bullet in his forehead, while leading his section to the charge.

Other voices, of whose previous life and circumstances we have a less detailed record, have also had their part in this sacred patriotic chorus. Young Antoine Boisson, a scion of a family of soldiers, and an *aspirant* in the 47th Regiment of Artillery, fell at eighteen, fighting for France, and thus puts himself on record at the beginning of the last year of his life on earth, in words that ring with hope and unselfish resolve.

"To-day begins the new year. It will be the year of victory! What will it mean for me? The greatest year of my life,—surely—if God grants that I survive. I am going to fight; am going to take part in war, in real war, which, for seventeen months, has numbered so many victims—friends,—comrades,—fellow-countrymen! Whatever destiny may be awaiting me, I shall waste no time thinking about the future. I confess I said to myself this morning, 'What will be left of me when still another year has taken the place of this one?' But my conscience quickly replied,—'Do your duty—your whole duty! That is the only thought worthy of a volunteer soldier like yourself. Let soul and heart obliterate the animal instincts and the revolt of one's baser nature. A man must hold up to himself some great dream to follow—*some goal to reach!*' And what is this war for, if not to train character? It has developed in me feelings I am proud of, though I am at a loss to say why.

"I am proud of being a soldier, of being

young, of knowing that I am brave and high spirited. I am proud of serving France, the land of my birth. Loyalty to the flag, love of country, respect of the given word,—the sense of honour—these for me are no hollow, meaningless phrases; they ring like a bugle-call to my heart, and for them—when the moment comes—I shall be able to make the supreme sacrifice!"

In a similar vein, young Alfred Aeschiman,—dying for France at twenty,—thus similarly expressed himself, during a farewell walk through the pine-woods and olive-groves of Southern France.

"How hard it is to accept death when one is twenty years old! I must never cease to keep before me the great ideals for which I am going to fight, and compare the worth of a mean, impure personality with that of the moral principles which are the glory of the human race!"

And another young volunteer adds the higher note that is needed to complete the foregoing, in his farewell words to the friend

who accompanied him to the recruiting station:—"I love life so dearly that if I did not have unswerving faith in the immortality of the soul, I might hesitate to enlist."

But these glimpses of young soldier-hearts would not be complete without a stirring record from a young hero of nineteen, who met a hero's end—one Michel Penet of the 8th Regiment of *Chasseurs—à-pied* in the spring of 1915, and on May 20 met a hero's end.

"If only," he writes to a friend,—"you could have been with me when the volunteers were called for! The lieutenant was there, with a copy of the ministerial decree in his hand. 'Who wishes to join the army of invasion?' he cried. In a moment, every arm was raised. There was but a single cry—'*I* do!' '*I* do!' It was more than mere patriotism that set all those caps waving in the air. It was vengeance! I have seen soldiers argue with their officers because they would not let them go. I have seen some of them weeping for rage. Every one of us has his quota of death to avenge!

"The Eighth Regiment had already been sent forward under fire eight times. Their lieutenant said to them—his men, 'You know, all of you, that the *chasseurs* are not made to live.' —— I am going forward with full confidence in the Divine mercy. Of course it is hard to make such a sacrifice when one is not yet twenty. That is the age when life is good to live. To-morrow we shall be in the Argonne: it will be a struggle to the finish. I shall fight for France, offering my heart to God; and when evening comes and the battle is over, I shall be resting for a few moments, and my thoughts will go out to you, who love me so much, and whom I love still more dearly. When night comes our hearts will be united!"

(Shortly after, on May 29, 1915, he fell in action.)

A fitting and touching companion picture to the last sentence is the following sweet and simple expression of faith and trust from the farewell letter of young Bernard Claudius Lavergne, thirteenth child of a humble glazier:—"To-night we leave for the trenches. To-night I shall be watching over you, rifle in hand. You know Who is watching over me!"

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