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Entente Cordiale

"

from the letters of
Lieutenant Henri G—

BOSTON

Geo. H. Ellis Co.

1918

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Preface

In the spring of 1916 a French soldier, Lieutenant G—, received from a dying comrade two letters which had come from America. The author of the letters was a stranger to both men, but was seeking, through the *Œuvre mon Soldat*, a chance to correspond with one of the defenders of France. Lieutenant G— answered the letters; and thus was begun a friendship which has grown firm and deep, though the writers have never met.

The messages from France are simple, direct expressions of the superb patriotism which animates every French soldier, from the highest officer to the humblest *poilu*. They reveal heartfelt appreciation of the assistance given to France by her allies; and at a time when German propaganda seeks to cast doubts on the motives and mutual relations of the Allied Powers, evidence such as this of the cordial feeling in the French Army toward us is of real importance.

The translation of Lieutenant G—'s letters is as nearly as possible a literal one. The arrangements for their publication have been made possible by the kindness of an interested reader who feels that their power to make friends should have wider scope.

True Allies, fighting for true democracy, will prove unconquerable.

W. L. W. F.

Aux armées,
29th August, 1916.

Cher Monsieur S—:

My dear comrade Delberg gave me, before dying, the two amiable letters you had sent to him. Wounded myself, I was unable to reply to you at once, and it was not until I returned to the front for the fourth time, that I found my little belongings and your letters. My comrade died bravely, as every one does here, in the front of these *maudits* Boches, who keep us from having news of our dear families.

As I see that your kind heart offered a correspondent to my dear departed friend, I ask you, if it will not trouble you too much, to write to me. I also am from the invaded regions, and I have my wife and three dear little ones in the hands of our enemies; therefore you can believe that it is not always gay. It would thus be with pleasure that I could distract myself with an exchange of letters. I know that your great country has taken an interest in our just cause. Your political questions interest me, and that which the neutrals think of us and our allies. The news of your country life—the stories of your little hens, etc.—interest me also, and change my ideas in recalling my lost hearth.

I am grateful to you in advance for the trouble

which you will take, and I shall do my best to write you often. It will seem so good to read an agreeable word. In this hope and begging you to accept for yourself and your family my best wishes, I beg you, *Monsieur*, to believe in my *meilleurs sentiments*.

Henri G—

13th November, 1916.

Cher Monsieur S—:

It gives much pleasure to us combatants to know that over there across the sea, unknown friends are thinking of us, and it is a comfort to feel ourselves morally sustained in the great cause for which we fight. As you have had the goodness to ask me what I should like, I permit myself to ask you if it would be possible to send some illustrated magazines which would make known to me and my friends your lovely country. It would give great pleasure to my comrades and to me and will make the hours seem less long, for in the mud and the snow one has not always a smile.

17th November, 1916.

I was agreeably surprised to receive two days ago your long and detailed letter. I do not

know how to thank you sufficiently for the pleasure it gave me and the moral aid you have thus brought me. As you ask it, it will be very delightful for me to converse frequently with you, and as the mail between our two countries takes so long, I am going to permit myself to write you about every two weeks. I am going to ask you to excuse me from not writing you in pure French, because I am not as well educated as you. I have made above all commercial and mechanical studies.

As you have been good enough to accept my correspondence, it is of the most elementary politeness that I should introduce myself. I am thirty-one years old and was before the war agent for a large steel firm in Lille. I lived with my wife and my three little children in a small house in the suburbs of Lille, where I had my office, and I travelled in the north of France and parts of Belgium. On the 9th of October, 1914, my quarter was bombarded and burned by the Germans on their entry into the city. Since this date I am entirely ignorant of what has happened to my dear family. *C'est le plus triste.* The factories to which I was attached, being in the east of France in the invaded regions, have been completely destroyed. There remains for us nothing at all but the courage to put one's self back to work as soon as the war is over. In

spite of our modest salaries, which do not compare with those of your region, I had a position which permitted me to have a charming house, and I worked with pleasure to offer a good education to my little children. All that is now only a remembrance—the little house which I had had built is completely destroyed. I do not know whether my papers, securities, etc., have been stolen or burned. That is of small importance now. The hope of returning victorious keeps one alive. When one is young with a good will one can make again a little living.

For two weeks we have had snow and it has been below freezing, and there is a great deal of fog, which makes the service hard. In spite of the fact that the shelters are quite comfortable, and that our chiefs give us everything which can protect us from the rigors of winter, one has not always the heart to write, especially when thinking of the beloved beings in the invaded regions, who suffer more than martyrs because of the Boches. You have read of the new atrocities in Belgium. If we had lacked courage, which is not the case, reading of all these crimes would give us the necessary vigor not to feel our own sufferings.

1st December, 1916.

Cher Monsieur S—:

I thank you truly for all your good wishes that I might win the "*baton de maréchal*." One does all one's duty without looking for honors.

For news I must tell you that I have just been wounded for the fourth time. There was in my sector a little marine cannon which was inactive. I obtained permission to use it, and during a fortnight I did great damage to the Boches. Then I was discovered by them and bombarded by them in a terrific manner—sixteen shells landing on the shelter of my gun emplacement. I kept on firing during this bombardment, which ended when my piece was struck, and it jumped back and hit me full in the chest. I was unconscious for two hours, but after that things went better. It was great luck that I had nothing broken. A centimetre lower and I should have had fatal injuries.

That was two weeks ago—I am getting along finely and await with impatience my cure in order to return to my comrades and my men in the trenches, for one is not comfortable in a hospital, feeling that when in bed one is not in his place. At this moment the only place for a soldier is in the fight, *mais que voulez-vous?* One is not wounded on purpose.

You must be following in the papers the martyrdom of Belgium. I fear always that my family may be enduring the same hardships. For a long time there has been practically nothing to eat there, and one has fears of not finding them alive. It would be a terrible grief to fight courageously as we do, only to find nothing left when the war is over.

27th December, 1916.

I thank you from the bottom of my heart as well as all the kind people who busy themselves with good works to aid our comrades and above all our families in the invaded regions. We are very grateful to your compatriots who occupy themselves with sanitary work and aviation. We all regret very deeply the death of *Monsieur* Norman Prince, who was well known and highly thought of in this region. I am charged by my comrades from the invaded regions to interpret to all the people in the different *œuvres* our thanks for that which you do for us to aid us obtain the victory.

1st January, 1917.

Cher Monsieur S—:

I received in its time your good letter of 15th November, and since its reception I promised

myself each day to write and thank you for showing me so many marks of sympathy, but recent events have occupied me and let me hope for an unexpected solution.

The length of time necessary between the sending and receiving of our correspondence does not permit me to chat with you on daily events. I am very grateful for the details you give me. If I do not reply to them at length it is in order not to make the censor shiver. I read your letter to my chiefs and my comrades, and all have asked me to thank you for the good wishes you addressed to our soldiers.

In these latter days since I received your letter, has appeared the request of your nation intervening for peace, which the Allies have rejected in a polite manner. I hope that on the receipt of this letter a great step will have been made towards the achievement of peace. That which we desire is truly glorious,—to assure to Europe and to the entire world tranquillity and the respect of the laws of humanity. We have suffered much,—it is said without complaining—not as to morale, for every one has a high idea of the sacrifice to be made, but physically,—we have passed long days without fire, in the water, in the mud, but we are willing to go through much more to assure the triumph of our arms, that our children or those for whom

we are responsible may have the assurance of a life wholly concentrated towards the good and the beautiful, instead of the worries of warriors.

I should like to have sent you extracts from the European papers on the subject of the various peace interventions, but military exigencies have distracted me from the normal life. For a whole week I have not read a paper. I am profiting by a day of rest to scratch off this letter. The news you sent gives me great pleasure. It is a tremendous help to know that "over there" your great country shows us so much sympathy, and that one of its families has been willing to interest itself in my modest self.

As you understand, the censor will not permit me to give precise details; otherwise I should be afraid of not being modest enough; but as you have asked me to write of some of my adventures, I will do so when I have a free moment, only I beg you not to compliment me on what I have done. Every one is brave here. If some have not done extraordinary things it is because the chance has not presented itself. Besides, in the middle of an action it is not easy to know when one is doing anything extraordinary. Admirable things are often done, and, in the circumstances where

they take place, regarded by their doers as insignificant. Personally I have lived through moments which seemed to me terribly long, where the effort expended did not correspond with the importance of living.

The thing which displeases the *poilu* most after the bombardments is an attack with the aid of asphyxiating gas. It is the most terrible thing that I know of and have lived through,—to feel one's self dying, to have seen one's comrades and one's leaders dying, without being able to reply, without returning the harm one receives; to die like a beast suffering the most awful agonies—it is terrible.

This last time when I was wounded in November I had nothing to complain of. My accident had been foreseen for a long time. Every one believes that some day something will happen to him, and in proportion to the harm I did the Boches I would not have paid dearly even if I had had to lose my life. My reasoning may seem to you peculiar, *mais que voulez-vous? c'est la guerre!* You give blows, you receive them. It is logic! The *poilu* who at the end of an engagement where he has fought well receives a bullet or a piece of shell is happy that it is not more serious, and finds that it was foreordained.

Without disturbing the censor, I can tell

you that I was at Verdun [1916] at the time which, if less happy than at present, was none the less glorious. We were among the troops who received orders to hold on, cost what it might. When after severe losses, caused by heavy artillery which nearly crushed us, we retired slowly, it was not on our part without having very heavy hearts; yet, in spite of the fact that we were among those who lost ground, our chiefs had words of praise in our favor for having held on so long with the few men the general command had been able to send to this place. Verdun was hell, it seemed to us. However, the Somme for the Boches is ten times that. Never were we demoralized. Tired, yes—remaining nine days without food or drink coming from the rear; and for those who had the strength to eat there was dried meat, dried biscuit, and chocolate. In spite of that, our *poilus* were so courageous that the officers and your correspondent were able to smile and joke. I do not know what was the cause, whether it was the horror of the multitude of corpses which were not respected even in death by the new shells which continually pulverized them—whether it was a sort of intoxication caused by fatigue and shock—whether it was tremendous preoccupation in the lives of my men and the movements of the enemy,—but I did not dur-

ing this entire period know what it was to be afraid. It was a curious phenomenon which permitted me to do things since judged remarkable, but which did not cost me great effort. Thus things are regarded in their true light. Comrades who had not my luck expended much more energy in doing little things.

One morning I was asked by a general to make a reconnaissance of the ground in front of our lines, consequently on the ground conquered by the Boches. I knew very well I could easily remain there, and departed, accompanied by an under officer. During an hour and a half, jumping from shell hole to shell hole, I was able to verify the line occupied by the enemy, in spite of the fact that four machine guns were trying to get me. Although wounded, I made a topographical plan of the ground, and succeeded in getting through a barrage of .105-centimetre shells the Boches put around me, and brought the plan safely back to my chief. That was the day I won the *croix d'honneur*. I knew the difficulty of the position, and said good-bye to my *poilus* before leaving, and departed whistling a hunting song.

Also during night patrols I have had unexpected hand-to-hand encounters with the Boches. I have even been carried off by a species of Hercules who picked me up by the

neck and managed to get hold of my legs; but I was able to succeed in commanding my men to fire, and my aggressor was killed while carrying me.

One day the Boches threw us a paper asking us to take at 9 P.M. some French papers and an hour later they would come and take them back to their lines. With the authorization of my superior officer I took four men and we put at the indicated spot a picket to which was attached a package of French newspapers. Instead of returning to our lines we went into ambush, and when the Boches (there were seven of them) came to get the papers we took six prisoners, letting one go to carry off the papers. For this occasion my men and I were given a few days' *permission*.

It is hard and painful to stand guard for entire hours in a trench in the mud, the rain, and the wind, expecting from one moment to another the arrival of a grenade or torpedo in one's face, but it is very interesting to spend long hours on patrol, the body flat on the ground in the mud, lying in wait for the passing of a Boche or an enemy patrol; to let them approach and seize them if it be an inferior force, or to attack them if it seems superior. One catches cold at this game, *mais c'est joliment intéressant*. To prepare a raid,

jump in the enemy trench, tumble onto a bewildered Boche whom one leads back triumphantly to one's chief,—these are true pleasure parties. But *hélas!* how many unfortunate deaths, how many poor comrades fall crushed by a shell or a torpedo, or in a shelter which caves in! *Mais encore que voulez-vous?*

It is for this reason: first, the desire to avert from our children the worries of such a catastrophe; second, the desire to free again our dear invaded regions, to find again those we love; and third, the desire to revenge one's self for those who have suffered and are no more; that gives us courage and sustains our morale. The French nation and our leaders have worked prodigiously to give us everything necessary. Thanks to the fleet of our friend England, we have continual provisions to nourish, clothe, and sustain us.

7th January, 1917.

Chère Mademoiselle B—:

I do not wish to put off till to-morrow the pleasure of thanking you for the delicate attention of sending me a remembrance. You can never know how deeply I was touched and gratified by the bundle I received to-day. In order to make you understand, I must tell you that never, since I left for the war, have I received a

bundle from any one who interested himself in me. At the moment when all my comrades received from their families *des friandises*, or provisions for the winter, I found myself more than ever forsaken. Permit me, *Mademoiselle*, as I may speak to you with an open heart, to express to you all my thanks for this delicate attention.

The rôle of a leader is sometimes ungrateful; I will tell you of a recent happening on All Saints' Day—(*La Fête des Morts*). I gave to my *poilus* a rest period on that afternoon to mark this solemn time and I visited each of my men. Many who were in the same situation as myself confided to me their grief for the absence of their relatives in the invaded regions, or for their dead. As well as I could, I comforted my brave comrades in combat, but re-entering my *abri*, face to face with reality, I found myself, an officer, having been able to say a kind and consoling word, without consolation for myself, while no one could doubt that I endured the same sufferings of *morale*.

And it is from you, *Mademoiselle*, to whom I am only an unknown person, the French soldier for whom you have been good enough to have a little sympathy, that comes the gift which recalls to me those of one's family. I do not know how to tell you how profoundly I was touched.

Pray believe that everything gave me pleasure,—your kind thought and the contents of the bundle. Also, *Mademoiselle*, if I have the good fortune to find again my little family, be sure that I shall teach my dear children to know and love you.

14th January, 1917.

Chère Mademoiselle B—:

To make you understand all the pleasure I had in receiving yesterday your good letter and the illustrated magazines, I must tell you that they arrived during a time of fatigue and depression which we call in the terms of the *poilu*, "*le cafard*." It is a state of depression,—not of discouragement—which takes one following great physical or mental fatigue—something in the nature of a *cri de nerfs*. Although being an officer, and therefore not having the right to let myself be overcome by *le cafard*, it produces, all the same, a halting of will-power. In these circumstances I have experienced several hallucinations, seeing compatriots from our invaded regions re-enter France and not seeing my dear ones come. I had at one time hoped for this happiness, but alas! it cannot be at present, for the Boches do not permit two members of the same family to leave and be repatriated. They are so unhappy there! I

shall tell you more of their manner of existence at another time.

Why do you ask me to excuse the mistakes in French which you may commit? Is it not more for me to regret that I do not know your clear language? If my duties were less numerous, I should set myself to the study of your grammar. I have already studied during the last year, outside my hours of guard duty, a little law and superior geometry, but it was quite difficult, for the Boches do not leave much time to do the big problems. In reality we have studies to do to prepare for the final battle, and it is necessary for us to study and put into application means of defence against the asphyxiating gases.

I also had a lovely little dog for a companion—"beau" is perhaps a little exaggerated. He was a *Griffon*, with reddish hair, curly and quite long. He was very little, and was given me as a present when he was only four weeks old. With a great deal of trouble I was able to raise him by the aid of condensed milk. All the regiment knew him. He wore a collar of horizon blue cloth like our clothes, on which one read in red soutache braid his name of Kamerad. He did not like the Germans, and was very useful to me during night patrols, when by his low growls he would put me on guard against an evening surprise attack. He was

wounded by a bursting grenade and later by a shell which fractured his paw. Well cared for, he once more trotted lightly. When at Verdun, when I was there, he was killed by bullets from a machine gun as he was carrying some instructions in his collar to one of my chiefs. I felt almost as much grief at his loss as at that of a *poilu*.

You must be following anxiously, as we do, the talks of peace. In spite of them we do not let ourselves be put to sleep by such hopes. We are preparing to give the great blow. We are in good condition materially, physically, morally, and with our adversaries it is above all the latter which is feeble, in spite of what the German press says.

16th January, 1917.

I do not wish to close without telling you a word of your compatriots who serve in our ranks. You can never know how much we admire them. They greet us with a broad and expressive smile which accompanied by a warm handshake takes the place of the most elegant conversation. You cannot believe the pleasure our *poilus* take in greeting one of your fellow-countrymen,—in shaking him by the hand and saluting him so proudly one would think he was saluting an officer. In the aviation your com-

patriots have shown great prowess, but it is above all in the sanitary service, in construction work, aiding the hospitals and particularly in the transport of the wounded that they have done wonders. I believe this latter accords a little with your temperament. At Verdun, under machine-gun fire, among the shell holes and corpses, I was taken out in a quiet little car driven by one of your countrymen who had no other worry than for our comfort, and who, without bothering himself about the barrage fire on the roads of evacuation,—or that which remained of them,—concentrated on avoiding a hole or a corpse which would cause more pain to our injuries.

24th January, 1917.

Chère Monsieur S—:

It is with a very heavy heart that I write you from the hospital where I have been for several days. Following a too prolonged stay in the snow I was taken ill, and my wounded knees began again to make me suffer a paralysis of the joints. It was a temporary crisis, but that which troubles me most is my chest, which, following the blow received in November, stifles me in a serious manner. I am, however, a very good invalid, for I have too much sorrow at leaving my men at the moment of the final

battle; then what a joy it will be for us who have been in Alsace so long, when we can throw ourselves into the enemy territory! I want that so much! I shall do my best to take my place among my good comrades as soon as possible. You must understand how hard it would be to have fought and held on until now and not to be in the last great battle, for it is the last which is going to begin soon. We do not have to form any wishes that it shall be favorable to us. We have confidence in our chiefs and in the means they will use to lead us to victory and find again our dear lost families.

Since my arrival here in a room that is too white and a bed that is too lovely, I have spent all my time in looking at the beautiful illustrated magazines which you have sent me. I recognized in a page of advertisements a picture the same as the postal card you sent me from Pasadena representing the orange groves with snow-covered mountains behind. I also found an illustration of my little dog, which in your country is called a Sealyham terrier; and I saw with pleasure the variety of hens, which were the amusement of my little ones—*des Campines*, which are the same as your Leg-horns. All the illustrations were superb, and my comrades in the same room were equally

interested in seeing them. My neighbor in the next bed was an officer of our native troops, who spoke French with great difficulty, and who went into ecstasies over these magazines which came from even further off than his own home. He was very amused and astonished that your customs and your clothes were not different from ours, as everything was new for a time to him in Europe.

4th February, 1917.

Chère Mademoiselle B—:

Before replying to your charming letter, permit me to tell you of some splendid news for me. I have had these last few days a reply to a message which I sent in May, 1916, to my family. The card was dated 15th of November, 1916, and, though very brief, it reassured me that my wife and children are in fair health but very unhappy because living is so difficult. It would be almost necessary to be a millionaire to live even moderately well where they are. It is thanks to the generosity of your committees that our families do not die of hunger.

I do not know whether I told you that when I was brought to the hospital this time I was again taken by an American ambulance. I happened to have with me one of your envelopes and I showed it to one of your compatriots.

He made me understand that he knew that part of the country and we shook hands heartily.

18th February, 1917.

Cher Monsieur S—:

I perceive that I have committed the discourtesy of talking too long of myself without speaking of the step which your Government has just taken [severing of diplomatic relations]. Although not expecting an effective intervention, every one here is happy to see the act of your country. It is long since the animation in our streets has been so great. Even our big victories have not so aroused the masses. It seems as if the doors of moral victory were opening and that the situation of the United States is going to cure our hurts.

The day of the announcement of American intervention, I put in my buttonhole a *cocarde* of your colors which *Mademoiselle B—* had put on one of the packages. By coincidence, my old father, to whom I had sent your letters, also the post-cards, that he may keep them for me and have them read later to my dear children, had bought a little American flag, which he put in the window of his apartment. He wrote me of it, saying, "I thought that would have been your wish if you had been present." It seems that a large number of our fellow-townsmen stopped

while he was fixing the flag in place, and they uncovered and gave an *hourra d'honneur*. My father was very proud to have been the cause of this demonstration.

Yes, it has happened to me to be afraid, and it will happen again. But these fears might be better called surprises. The firing of a gun, or the rapid passing of a shell, makes one duck one's head in an instinctive manner. On the contrary, a foreseen and expected attack leaves one calm and indifferent. At Verdun during the strongest attacks, during the artillery duel which crushed us, I took notes very tranquilly and sent off reports to my superiors, as if in my office. Never during all that time did I have a sensation of fear. I was very lucky in this, for, being calm almost to the point of foolish indifference, I was able to busy myself with the service and above all with my *poilus*. Do not think this was brave. It was only natural. It was splendid, for example, to see one of my sergeants, who ordinarily was afraid, and who, to give me pleasure, tried hard to be fearless—he was much less calm than I, but deserved a hundred times as much merit, for he was making a great effort. At times even I would ask myself if during such circumstances one did not lose one's feeling, because I remained insensible to the most awful horrors. That which added

to the impression of calm was the full consciousness of my duties as an officer. When one realizes that the lives of 200 to 250 *poilus* depend on one, and when one feels the responsibility of his acts, that he must think and act for all this little group,—and I beg you to believe it is no easy thing,—one becomes so absorbed one forgets himself. The poor *poilu* is the most unfortunate. He is guided by the idea that his leader is there with him, and follows him with his eyes. That is true, but he has only himself to think of and his own poor life.

It is a great help for a chief to feel the confidence of his men, gained by knowing how to measure the effort asked for, and obtaining their unshakable faith by never asking them to do impossible things. Once at the time of a counter-attack at Verdun I remained the only officer commanding my company and its neighbor in the battalion, I being known to the men, but not knowing all of them. I gave the signal for the attack, and, without my having to pay with my life,—being the first to leave the trench,—these 350 or 400 men departed at my command. I assure you, *Monsieur*, that was splendid. In such a moment one measures the grandeur of the enormous confidence which the men have in their leaders. I could never have a better reward than that. I have never known anything

more splendid than the spirit with which they replied to my signal. You will excuse me, *Monsieur*, for taking so long with my explanations, but I have touched on a subject very dear to me. I love my *poilus*, and I believe I may say that it is reciprocated.

12th March, 1917.

Cher Monsieur S—:

Speaking of the American Ambulance, I do not know whether I have told you that I can never forget the service they did at Verdun. No words could express my feelings. I was wounded, and waiting at the advance post for my evacuation. In spite of bursting shells and machine-gun fire which rained over us, the automobiles arrived at the appointed hour at the meeting-place,—all except one which was crushed by a bursting shell. In the inside of the car were four *blessés couchés*. Two of them were terribly hurt. I did not want to take the place of a stretcher, and as I could still hold myself upright, they enveloped me in many wrappings and put me on the front seat at the right of the driver. I thought he would start off at great speed, as quickly as possible to avoid the firing. No, not at all. Very slowly, as if in the middle of an avenue, he avoided the numerous shell holes and corpses which would

have jarred the wounded. The driver, who only spoke French with great difficulty, kept asking me if he was not going too fast for the good of my wounded comrades. I could live a hundred years but I would never forget your compatriot. I, who was only able to keep up after a month of torture by the prospect of escaping death once again, found strength to greatly admire this man. What a lesson of energy I got from him. When he helped me to get down, we shook hands in a most moving manner. We put all our hearts into it. You can testify on my part for the devotion of your friends among us. We will never forget them.

(THE SOMME, 1917)

21st March, 1917.

You must be happy because of this German retreat. For us it is not joy; it is delirium. My poor comrades who are from the reconquered regions do not know how to contain their joy. Sunday and Monday every one embraced every one else, officers and simple *poilus*, as if everything was saved. Unfortunately one perceives after the departure of these cursed Boches many new atrocities—all the wells and springs poisoned; quantites of young girls

carried off, violated, killed, or massacred. They ought, however, to fear a prompt chastisement. Perhaps one day our English allies will deliver a blow near Lille and will let me hope to see again my dear family. You can never doubt the sufferings of spirit we have endured.

What do you think of the Russians? Here all that news was welcomed differently. For those who were not informed of the latest internal incidents, it seemed like a catastrophe, for a French proverb says, "One does not change mounts in the middle of a ford." In other words, one does not change leaders in the middle of a battle. For those who knew how formidable and unfavorable for our cause were the Imperial Party, one expected those "who whistle up a wind" to "arouse a tempest." The decision of the new government to continue fighting to the end has changed all opinions in favor of the revolution. When will one take place in Germany?

6th April, 1917.

Cher Monsieur S—:

Since I have just read the telegram announcing the entry of your country into the war, it is not possible for me to live another hour without telling you what emotion this news makes us feel. Permit me, humble officer to whom you

have given your confidence and your sympathy, to express to you the joy and pride which we experienced in feeling our hearts beat with yours. The tremendous aid which your country will bring us is not only material; it is above all an aid of morale and a comfort. The entry into the war of your great nation gives the whole world official recognition of outraged right and menaced civilization. All honor to you for this act.

I do not know how to describe to you the joy of every one here—officers and soldiers. There are moments when it is good to live. I wish that you could have taken part in this celebration. My comrades and my men to whom I speak often of you and of the sentiments which you express to me have come this instant to compliment me on being your friend. My commandant has also just telephoned to congratulate me. You see I am not modest to tell you this. I am personally very happy and proud to have seen such a spirit, and to be the interpreter for every one here, to tell you of the expressions of our gratitude and our most ardent wishes for your success in arms.

In begging you to recall me to the good remembrance of your family, be good enough, *cher Monsieur*, to accept my most cordial thoughts.

Henri G—.

Beauvais,
28th April, 1917.

Chère Mademoiselle B—:

You must be saying to yourself that some accident has happened to me, for three weeks have passed since writing you. We have been engaged in these late affairs—that is what has hindered me from writing, and for the last three days I have been with my little family, whose return I had the good fortune to announce to you.

It is not possible for me to write you at length of all the events which preceded my arrival near my repatriated family. I can tell you I asked myself with a very heavy heart in what state of health I should find them. Thanks to the courage and energy of my dear wife, which has been most admirable, my children do not carry too much the traces of their captivity. Only my wife appears fatigued by the privations she has imposed on herself in giving her part to her children. She has been wounded by shrapnel in the left side, but she does not suffer from it now, and at one time she was ill in bed without care for three weeks with a congestion of the lungs contracted during the long waits necessary to obtain food.

I ought to begin by telling you that it was with tears in her eyes *Madame G—* charged

me to express to you all her gratitude for the help and food which the American Committee gave to her. Without them, they would all have died of hunger. Words will not describe the suffering endured by my little family. All *that* is now but a terrible remembrance, because I have the good fortune to have them in France. There remains to me only to have them cared for and to settle them. I hope that to have them cared for will be easy. *Madame G—* has need of nourishing food and tonics, for she is emaciated, and my oldest daughter equally so. She is growing very fast and has not been nourished as she should have been. My little son is more gravely ill. Of a nervous temperament, he was much impressed with all this war, and following the explosion of a powder factory situated in our quarter, he had a shock, became bewildered, and has remained mentally enfeebled ever since. Only my youngest girl has preserved her good spirits and knows how to laugh at all her troubles. You can imagine that, in spite of my happiness at finding them alive, there was a shadow over the picture.

There remains now the question of settling them. My wife had wished to bring away with her all that was left of her money and belongings, the greater part of which had been

destroyed or stolen; but when at the moment of departure she was examined by the Germans, they refused to let her take anything, even her *livret de famille*, her only official piece of identification. She was thus forced to come away with the little sum of 150 francs, which the Boches permitted. In spite of all her joy at being again among the French, my wife weeps for that which remains with the Boches. Now we possess nothing at all. Not a *bijou*, not a single souvenir. The bandits would not even permit my dear little girls to take their dolls; therefore they were made happy when on their entry into Switzerland some one gave them a very little one.

I have spoken to *Madame G—* of you all, and read to her your correspondence during the three days' *permission* I obtained on their return. I have told her all the gratitude I owe you for the moral and material aid you have given me. I gave her the marks of sympathy you have so kindly afforded me. She was profoundly touched and would like to have thanked you herself. Unfortunately her state of health does not permit her to hold a pen,—she trembles too much. But that will be for later on. My oldest daughter, Berthe, asks me to let her write for her mamma. I close, *chère Mademoiselle*, in the hope that this letter finds you in the

midst of delightful excursions. As soon as I am back in the trenches I will write again.

Meilleurs souvenirs à votre famille. Plus cordialement.

H. G—.

(LETTER FROM BERTHE)

Chère Mademoiselle B—:

I thank you with all my heart, as well as all the people of your country, for the *ravitaillement Américain*, which has kept my dear mamma, my brother and sister and me from dying of hunger. I thank you, as well as your good mother and *Monsieur votre père*, for all that which you have done for my dear papa.

Also, I love you very much and send you my best kisses. *Vive Les États-Unis!*

A little Lilloise,

Berthe G—.

18th May, 1917.

Now I have plenty of news of my family, but for the present they are not joyous. I had to see them come back in a condition bordering on misery, without proper clothes, with nothing in fact but sickness and enfeebled by two years of privation. I assure you it was hard. Forgive me if I confide thus in you things I cannot say

to my family, but there are moments when one seems at the end of one's strength.

I do not remember whether I gave you a few details of the manner of life in Lille. Did I tell you that for more than two years they have only had 250 *grammes* of bread a day; that my wife had to buy grain and grind it in her coffee-mill and make from it a sort of cake of doubtful taste; and that eggs which cost 15 *centimes* in normal times were above 125 *centimes*, meat 30 *francs* for 500 *grammes*, and very scarce? Also that the explosion of a neighboring powder factory practically destroyed my house and stunned my children, and that my son then received serious injuries which have affected his mind?

24th May, 1917.

Chère Mademoiselle B—:

At the moment when your letter arrived I was going to a small attack. I read your letter hastily and glanced at the lovely photographs. Then carefully putting in an inside pocket your pretty little flag, and happy as a child, I went "over the top" with my men.

If I write you so gayly to-day, it is because I have come out once again from a bad place. The result was not brilliant, but I brought back all my little world. Nevertheless I had luck. My

clothes were pierced by little pieces of the grenade, my watch smashed on my wrist, and I had several scratches on the face. Yesterday one was anxious for the success of the affair. To-day one rests happy that one has taken a kilometre of trenches which does not even appear in the *communiqué*. Only one has come out of it with a whole skin and I have been sparing of my men. That sounds a very little thing, but it is of enormous importance.

You know, perhaps, the etymology of the word "*poilu*"? *La voilà*: During the retreat from Belgium and the Battle of the Marne,—in fact during all the phases of the fighting in the open,—one could not reasonably give much thought to one's comfort or even the necessary cares of hygiene. Following the addition of the English to our line of troops came a physical renaissance. It is not rare now to see, the evening before an attack, the men freshly shaved and the moustaches curled,—guess with what? With a nail heated by a match! Coldly the *poilu* will tell you, "I am making myself beautiful to die," or "to show the Boches that I still have soap"!

28th May, 1917.

Cher Monsieur S—:

You can never know how reading of your delightful travels changes our ideas from our

present life. Yesterday once again it was Sunday—Feast of Pentecost. In the trenches one knows very little of Sunday, still less of religious festivals, for it seems that the Boche prefers these days for making a heavy blow. I celebrated this *fête* in the afternoon by re-reading all the interesting correspondence you have exchanged with me. Sitting at the bottom of a communication trench, a piece of canvas stretched over our heads to protect us from the sun while reading the letters and looking at the photographs, my comrades and I passed some delightful moments, when our imaginations took us far from the realities. I was happy to notice one thing: From my comrades and those of my men who in passing by my improvised shelter glanced over the photographs, I did not hear one expression of envy; on the contrary I picked out many reflections of this sort: “To say that here are happy people who are coming to break their heads to give us pleasure, and all for an ideal,—it is *chic*, all the same.” The expression is rough, but it denotes none the less the admiration that our brave but uneducated *poilus* have for your compatriots. You can never know what great moral aid you bring to us.

I know well that fatigue and weariness can be read on many faces, but it has been said that victory will be for the one who knows

how to suffer a quarter of an hour longer than his adversary. For us, in spite of the restrictions, and ill-supplied wants of the civilian population, the future does not appear uncertain. Certainly all is not rosy. There is even much blood in the picture of the situation, but in spite of our individual and national enemies we remain confident.

Recently there have been requests for officers knowing English to act as instructors in the American Army, and I regretted greatly not to be able to compete. In December I refused to be instructor to the class of 1918, because I did not wish to leave my regiment, but since my return from the hospital, as I am often ailing, I fill in, which is less interesting than being fixed in one company.

6th June, 1917.

Cher Monsieur S—:

It is true that the future sometimes appears dark and full of worries. The East is to us a complete mystery. What will the Russians do? I think they are like spoiled children to whom the intercourse with a black bogey is salutary. I think the spectre of China and Japan leagued for a crushing blow would open their eyes and oblige these revolutionaries because of their lack of a ruler to let themselves

be governed. One hopes that a Washington or a Danton will know how to impose himself upon them.

Apropos of anecdotes of my *poilus*, I forgot to tell you that the little starry flag which I received from *Mademoiselle B—*, has had some victims. You can easily understand that such a lovely flag could not remain without being used; therefore, the evening of its arrival, fixed on the end of a bamboo pole which served as an antennæ for wireless telegraphy, we carried it out in front of our line, and arranged ten metres in front of it a wire with a gas-bell attached. The day came, and the Boches, perceiving the flag, fired on it without result. In the evening, one of our machine gunners got ready his piece, and the comrades listened. At eleven o'clock the bell rang; it was the Boche running into the wire. A round of machine-gun fire; then silence. At 1 A.M., a new noise; new firing; and then cries. About 3.30 I had the flag brought in. Two days later we learned from a prisoner that at eleven o'clock we had killed two men, and one had died of wounds; while at 1 A.M. one was killed and three wounded. That was not bad. I was so pleased with the success of this little game that I offered an extra wine ration and a cigar to each of those who had served the machine gun.

8th June, 1917.

Chère Madame S—:

Yesterday I received the lovely illustrated cards which you sent me from the Yosemite Valley and I thank you very much for them. You must have had a delightful trip in that beautiful region. The waterfalls are superb and the view is magnificent. It changes greatly one's thoughts, for instead of thinking of our existence in the earth I can dream of the splendors of your national parks.

Also I have received the wonderful big box of *friandises*. I am truly too spoiled by all the good things you send me, and it will never be possible for me to thank you sufficiently.

If it pleases you to know of my satisfaction in receiving such a splendid bundle, it would perhaps please you more to know what use has been made of it. I was going to write, "Your bundle arrived at a fortunate moment," but I would then have used the customary phrase with which the *poilu* acknowledges the reception of a bundle, for there is no example of a bundle arriving without need. Does that mean that one lacks everything? Oh, no. But one can always find a use for everything that comes. I unpacked your bundle, and while contemplating this great box of delicious things, had many reflections on the inefficiency of the submarines,

and on the way in which to thank you for your delicate attention. I asked myself whether it would be better to eat them at once in order that the rats should not take too large a share, or that—one never knows—a shell should crush my hiding-place; or whether it was preferable to keep them for a day when there was a lack of food, or, better yet, to offer them as a reward to some brave *poilu*, or as a feast after some good news. I finally decided on the latter.

In going through the shelters at meal-time to observe the condition of my men and to hear their thoughts, I perceived one of my good men did not eat. On questioning him, he told me his teeth bothered him and that he could not chew the bread, which was very hard, following its long trip to the trenches. I thought quickly of my box of crackers, and, although I am not a gourmand, a rather selfish feeling kept me for a moment from going for them. That did not last long, for I could not endure seeing him suffer in chewing. I offered him a handful of my crackers, but when I saw his pleasure at being able to eat, I gave him the whole box. The others, his comrades, laughed at him and treated him like a millionaire because he was eating lentils cooked with onion with such dainty biscuits. You see how one becomes like a child when one ought to be most serious.

These are little incidents which enliven our lives and which keep up the spirit of good fellowship. Not to break the rule, you can see that your box arrived at a moment when one had need of it.

A sentiment which has developed greatly among us here is fatalism. It is not a religious question nor a sign of discouragement, neither of loss of morale. It is above all the result of things seen and lived through. One told me recently of the attitude of the colonel of one of the regiments which attacked Moronvilliers: Before the attack he went out in front of our line of departure and waited in a shell hole the hour of attack. By this act each wave of assault had to pass by him, and he saluted them. He was a fatalist. During all the attack he showed complete indifference, and nothing happened to him.

From the religious point, for one to be a fatalist is, perhaps, the wrong conception of the laws which govern human beings, but from the military point of view it is a tremendous strength. When in the middle of a bad passage the instinct of self-preservation makes you want to hide or stop and be no longer master of yourself, at this moment one says, "Come what may," and continues on his way. It is a great help. In hard moments, at Verdun

and others, I have been happy to be a fatalist. One thus creates for one's self an illusion of security which rests one. Before closing permit me to thank you again for all your thoughtfulness and delicate attentions. In the hope that this letter finds you in the midst of delightful excursions.

Be good enough to accept, *chère Madame*, to yourself and your family the expression of my most cordial thoughts.

H. G.

5th July, 1917.

Cher Monsieur S—:

You must be wondering if I have suddenly become completely indifferent, not to have replied to your interesting letter of the 5th of June, which I found by good luck in the *débris* of that which remains of my belongings.

It is not possible for me to tell you from where I have come, but, however, I can tell you that I have been for three weeks in one of the corners which has had the sad monopoly of being daily in the *communiqués*. Do not expect me to tell you any of the events. It is not that I do not know several stories, but I am too full of the horrors of that vast carnage which I have been through and where many Boches' corpses

mixed themselves, alas, with those of the French. The carnage at Verdun, which deeply impressed me, was surpassed in horror by the awful visions of these bloody days. One wonders how one has come out alive and without a scratch. Do not think that our proportion of losses was enormous. Happily not. There were many losses, because so many were engaged in this furnace. There were also many slightly wounded, which, in a week, or at most a month, can rejoin their units.

Our preparation of artillery was marvellous, stupefying, appalling, and murderous. But the thirst and hunger,—ah, what cruel suffering! How I blessed *Madame S*— for the delicious preserves which made the terrible hours less hard for me. In spite of the physical or moral depression, inevitable after each great effort, one is happy to find one's self alive again, when for ten days and twelve nights one has seen and felt death brush by you a hundred times daily.

To tell you of my surprise yesterday when opening a paper (an unknown thing for three weeks) I read of the war news, and above all of the arrival of American troops in France. How my heart beat on the day of your festival of independence! I wish I could have been near you to express to you all my feelings.

As I am counting on leaving *en permission* to-morrow, it may be that I can be in Paris for the 14th of July. I shall, without doubt, have the pleasure of seeing your splendid "Teddys." I shall seem to see a little of your country shining in their eyes. You will excuse me if I do not write at length to-day. I must tranquillize my family, who have not heard from me for ten days and may be worried.

Beauvais,
13th July, 1917.

It has been a great task for *Madame G—* to make again a little home. It does not compare with that which we had at Lille, but she can have the strict necessities, though it grows very slowly. She was desolated at the idea that the little house she had rented here would not suit me. However, for seven weeks she has worked with a great heart, without caring for her enfeebled health; she has busied herself with getting the large garden into shape and caring for the growing vegetables. To-day she was well satisfied, for I could not express my satisfaction at such a splendid accomplishment and also at seeing the children in good health and suitable surroundings.

23d July, 1917.

Chère Mademoiselle B—:

A funny thing has just happened to the Boches opposite to us. I need not tell you it was a *coup de main*. The English have for a long time carried out these fruitful raids. Generally a raid has for its object to make prisoners, in order to know one's neighbor, who he is and where he comes from, that which he thinks, and all the things that may interest the high command. Sometimes it succeeds; sometimes it does not. Lack of artillery preparation, abandonment of trenches by the Boches at the beginning of an operation, and, *Dame*, one cannot bring back that which does not exist.

About two days ago the Boches tried a raid on us, well led, it is necessary to admit; but instead of making prisoners of us, it is we who have captured them! Like the moral in a fable of La Fontaine, "He is taken who wishes to take"—"*Tel est pris qui croyait prendre.*" This will be moreover the conclusion of the war. Are not our neighbors amiable? They gave themselves great trouble to come to us. They would have done better to surrender, for several of them were wounded. To revenge themselves they bombarded us heavily. If I am writing badly it is because of the continuous trembling of the

two fires,—French artillery combating that of the Boches. Happily it is only the artillerymen who are after each other at this moment, and all the shells are passing over us. *Voilà la guerre.* To-day, or at least at this moment, one does not think much of what is happening to the artillerymen. Every one here is sitting outside. One is even breakfasting in the sun. This evening it will perhaps be the reverse. The artillerymen may dine tranquilly in the shade, thinking each must hide in his turn. Only for the poor infantryman it is more often his turn. He is not content with collecting shells from the cannon; he is the only one who offers himself the luxury of receiving bullets, torpedoes, and grenades, flaming liquids, and other diabolical inventions conceived by German kultur.

Enclosed in this letter are some violets which I picked for you when I took a trip to Ballon, Alsace. The word "excursion" is perhaps pretentious. You must imagine three or four hours of climbing, heavily loaded, with the mind on quite different things than contemplating the countryside. Naturally at the arrival at the summit one has little admiration except for the spring of fresh water which permits us to slake our thirst. Following that with a glance, careless because of fatigue, at a lovely panorama which deserves more attention, one stretches

one's self on the grass, or the snow, according to the season.

I had wanted to write you at length to-day, but the Boches have begun firing again and I must go to see that my *poilus* are ready for unpleasant encounters, and also to try and make out the intentions of the Boches. If only they will not try a heavy blow to-night.

Au revoir, chère Mademoiselle. My best remembrances to you and your family.

H. G—.

7th August, 1917.

Chère Madame S—:

I feel the need of writing. It is a great relaxation for me. For ten days we have been entirely in the water in a relatively calm *secteur*. We are living in regular swamps, little or no shelter—not only no shelter for protection from shells,—for one does not count much on them, as nothing resists them,—but we have no shelter against the rain. It is truly strange to see such a thing; I cannot give you any reason. For the first few days I had a hole a little larger than that of a terrier, and I had to curl up while lying in it, for I could not sit up. I had for a mattress a mat such as one puts over hotbeds, only mine was made of reeds such as are used for fishing-poles. It was in an advanced state of decay.

It is needless to add that a collection of insects of all sorts inhabited it. Clayey soil everywhere, red as blood, covered one like a cloak, and kept the dampness in one's feet. Our clothes, hands, even faces, were all the same color.

Two days ago my *poilus* gave me the surprise of offering me a shelter which seemed like a palace in comparison to my former one. We had had to build a shelter for the munitions, and the *poilus* had enlarged its dimensions. I had thus a place two feet wide, six feet long, and four feet high, where I could move about on my knees, and above all stretch myself out quite well. You cannot doubt that it was comfortable for me. I had for a table a box of cartridges, for a chair a case of grenades, and on the walls were fixed rockets of all colors, which serve us at night for signalling the artillery. While waiting for this important task, the latter served me as hooks on which to hang my belongings to dry.

It was absolutely impossible to be clean; even by washing one's hands twenty times a day, one could not hope to touch paper without soiling it. My men were even more unhappy, I think, though we have not all the same tastes. For me the height of comfort is to be able to write—whether in a trench or in a shelter, provided I

can write, all is well. But alas, it has been impossible to write outside, as it rains all day; impossible to write inside because I cannot sit upright, nor can I have a light because of the explosives. You see I have the entire series of trench munitions *chez moi*,—cartridges, star shells, grenades, machine-gun belts, rockets, and asphyxiating— [Censored.]

24th September, 1917.

I forgot to tell you that on my departure for the new *fabrique de communiqués* we crossed some camps and detachments of Americans. It was for all of us a tremendous encouragement and a delightful sensation. They were very imposing in their sober clothes and with their regularity of movement.

I must tell you that the new Boche gas is not joyous. It has a caustic action on the face and clothes. In spite of that, the number of losses among the wounded who are affected does not amount to one per cent. It is above all from the point of view of morale that gas has effects; in a little while one will think no more of it. It is not thus with the tanks. They have great moral effect on the Boches, because they cause them actual losses; the Boches speak of them as diabolical inventions.

If you knew where my division is and what it is doing at the present time, you would easily be astonished that I can scratch off so much paper so tranquilly. I cannot be ashamed that I am not with it, because it is not my choice, that I have been put in the rear for several days, as I cannot march. My poor knees refuse to carry me. My long stay in the swamps produced a new crisis in joint troubles. For several days I could hardly hold myself on my horse. In spite of the fact that I am very peaceful here, it is not without painful emotion that I hear the incessant rumbling of cannon, and each courier brings me the same news,—success of my regiment, and the names of comrades who have paid for it with their lives. We all know very well one cannot make an omelet without breaking the eggs, but I have never left my comrades and I feel like a lost being, here in this calm.

4th October, 1917.

Chère Mademoiselle B—:

I perceive that health is a precious thing, for I had hoped to remain with my brave *poilus* until the end of these hard combats, but I have had to leave them in spite of myself. This latter time we “have had them,” as say the *poilus*. I cannot give you details, but you may

have read in certain *communiqués* that three times the Boches have attacked us and three times we have repulsed them. It is not a great offensive like those so many times carried out. It has been an effort to take from us certain important points of observation which we took from them some time ago. From the moment that we occupied these points they have been very interesting for us; also we have held them.

If I had remained it would not have been possible for me to speak of this, but because of my absence these latter days I can tell you that everything was marvellous. I will tell you later on of the *citation* with which the *grand chef* gratified us. At the moment we are receiving congratulation on congratulation, but that which seems best to us is to feel the confidence of our *poilus*. I have already spoken to you of this, but I cannot keep from repeating it. In general our numbers are made up of older men, therefore more thoughtful because of age and family cares. I have had occasion many times to hear advice given by our older men to the younger ones, and it is admirable to see them. I cannot describe to you the enthusiasm of these counter attacks; they seemed like nothing but a race against death. I have seen—because unfortunately I could not be among the first, because of my lame legs—

some of my poor boys, knocked down by a shell or throwing themselves into a hole to escape one, run with all their might to catch up with the wave of assault.

Near me a machine gunner was sitting tranquilly by his piece, waiting until the Boches' attack was not more than 100 metres off before opening fire. He nearly burst with satisfaction. "*Regardez, mon lieutenant,*" he cried to me, "how I am ripping them up!" and in truth he made havoc with them. I have told you that the fire gives a feeling of security—I mean that when one begins to be afraid one fires to give one's self confidence. You will understand therefore that my comrade with the machine gun was very cool-blooded. I who had not the right to be afraid, had to hang on to myself not to command him to begin firing. It is then that one feels one's self a little thing,—very little in the midst of this tempest of firing; and when one sees the gray uniforms precipitating themselves toward you, one cannot help wondering whether one is to be the sheep or the butcher.

You are going to ask me how I found the Boches in this attack; what was my impression of them. In all sincerity I can tell you that I found them a little changed, because in this corner where I come for the second time the

rôles are reversed. Last year it was the Boches who attacked to the finish; they had then the advantage, and we more difficulties in holding on, because it was necessary to hold on. This year it is we who attack without haste, methodically, and with a great deal more economy of human material than the Boches had last year; therefore it is not astonishing if I find things changed.

I have had occasion lately to talk with prisoners, because we have sometimes even made more than we wanted. There are times when prisoners are very cumbersome. In general the Boche who has no leader surrenders easily. To one of my comrades having thirty men with him, one hundred Boches presented themselves, with cries of "*Kamerad.*" You will admit it was cumbersome, above all when one had good reason to suspect that each prisoner had two or three grenades in his pocket. They might easily try to reverse the rôle and make, or try to make, prisoners of my friends.

In a shelter we once found a strong Boche garrison who, when summoned to surrender, replied unanimously, "*Kamerad sans officiers.*" I ought to say in honor of the latter that they had preferred shooting themselves. All the men surrendered. All the Boches are persuaded that there will be no winter campaign. Great

was the astonishment of an officer when I told him we were ready to pass it in fighting. Much greater was his astonishment when, in speaking to me of your armies—which he said would never come to Europe because their submarines barred the ocean—I took from my pocket, along with your flag, a photograph of an American camp taken as we were coming to this region. He couldn't believe his ears when I told him. "The Americans! But there are one hundred thousand of them,—and moreover, before the hour is out you will see some yourself." This was true, as on his way back of the lines he would have to pass near to a place over which floated your starry flag. An officer told me that he paid tribute to the correct treatment we give our prisoners, in spite of the stories which he had orders to give his men. Further up I spoke to you of the very military conduct of the Boche officers who did not wish to surrender, but I forgot to tell you that for the others we have been given, without having asked for it, very precise instructions permitting us to annihilate troops who attack again after surrendering.

To finish my little stories to-day, which I hope will not bore you too much, I want to tell you the adventure of a young Boche prisoner; apropos of age, I have forgotten to tell

you that that which strikes me most is the youth of our adversaries. We have troops of seventeen and nineteen years in front of us; also their morale is very young. A youngster of eighteen fell completely bewildered on one of my *poilus*, who immediately hindered him from all his bad intentions, which, however, he really did not have at all. They brought him to me. Our sector seemed relatively calm at that moment, and I could permit myself a little distraction. Noticing his unembarrassed air, I asked him if he was pleased to be a prisoner; he replied in the affirmative and told me of his misadventure. He had been one of some troops of assault, and in the first wave. As he had very little belligerent taste, he allowed himself to fall into a shell hole and let his comrades pass on. He knew that behind the waves of assault other regiments would have to come to install themselves on the conquered territory, or that which ought to have been conquered. He waited an hour; then when all was calm again and the machine guns had ceased their rattling, he said to himself that he could without fear advance to his first line and retake his place among his comrades. Everything led him to hope for a good result, for no one had gone back. He advanced from shell hole to shell hole, saw the corpses of several Frenchmen who had too

boldly advanced in front of our line, and he did not take into account the great number of Boche corpses. Positive of being on the right road he continued to advance, and was picked up by us without having seen a Boche line. It was easy for me to understand. The attack of which he was a part had not been able to reach our lines. None had taken the road back, almost all of them being killed, and the living being prisoners.

You may repeat to *Monsieur* your father that a very cultivated prisoner affirmed to me that in Germany one thinks that America will make an appearance of arming herself; that she will never fight. I think—and you are even more certain—that their disillusionment will be great.

Before closing, I want to assure you that those in your country who put their hope in aviation see things in their true light. More than ever of late I have observed of what capital importance are the things of the air. The courage of the *poilus* for an attack would be nothing without artillery. This latter depends on the aviation. We have had a great many examples of it; and there as elsewhere the Boche works, too. It is necessary to recognize this quality in him.

I have just been spending some delightful

hours with the lovely magazines received. Stretched on several chairs—for I cannot move—I admired at length the lovely pages of the *Studio*, with its beautiful colored illustrations, and the pictures in *Asia* and the *National Geographic*. *Motor Life* has charmed me. The *American Photo Magazine* and *Travel* interested me very much. *Film Fun* and *Life* were very amusing. While I am writing, one of my comrades has been resting himself from the horror of the carnage from which he had just come, by looking at certain illustrations in the *Studio*. It is easy to understand how these sketches charm him.

7th November, 1917.

Chère Monsieur S—:

I ought to tell you of my great pleasure while on my 10 days' *permission* in finding *Madame G*—and her two daughters in better health again. Unhappily this is not the case with my poor Pierre. He remains always under the effects of the concussion of 1916. According to the advice of doctors who have seen him, he needs to be sent for quite a stay to a medical and instructive establishment. Prices of board are unfortunately very high—200 to 700 francs a month. I have made a request to the Prefecture of my Department, in view of having him admitted

to one of these schools free of charge as a war victim, or at least at a reduced rate. I know that the request has been sent to the Minister with a favorable opinion. . . .

I have had occasion to see troops of very different countries. First of all, the Americans in great numbers—splendid in bearing and presence. They impress one by their correct behavior and appearance. They represent for us the Great Hope,—the deliverance and the return of our murdered country. But will we ever return there? English and Portuguese were quite numerous in the regions I came through. Seen in Paris were some *Bersaglière*, splendid Italian soldiers, not yet affected by the bad news—all were transients, I think Serbians and Roumanians, Russians and Belgians—also French *poilus*.

All Saints' Day, November 1st, we went to the great cemetery for the official service for the dead, and in the afternoon we went to *des Invalides* to see the war trophies and to salute the aëroplane of our great aviator Guynemer. It was impressive. In the middle of the Court of Honor the aëroplane was placed, but hidden under the flowers, wreaths, and bouquets which his admirers had placed there in saluting or inclining themselves in front of it. There, as in other public places, I admired the behavior

of your splendid soldiers. Later that day I entered into a café, where it seemed to me there were no empty places, but two United States soldiers got up to offer me their place, as I was an officer. I found that very charming. Above all, it was offered in such a graceful manner. . . .

You are probably going to ask me how I found our great city during the fourth winter of the war. *Eh bien!* truly, in spite of my rather low spirits, caused by the recent death of some of my comrades and the Italian affair, I found Paris very striking. I speak of the superficial Paris—that which one sees on the streets and the boulevards. One must not forget that it is made up of sixty per cent. strangers—people brought there by the needs of the war, and living for and by the war.

As to the heart of Paris, it suffers discreetly at home. It weeps for its dead and waits for the return of those it loves, but it remains ever confident. It is no longer the frivolous Paris one would have known formerly. It is like a person growing wiser with age. Even bad news leaves it indifferent. But it is not insensible; for if there is a victory, of little importance even, it lives again. That which gives a great deal of animation is the going through of the *permissioinaires*,—people who wish to live happily during a very short period, but always replaced by

their successors. And as for your soldiers, we must love them well and receive them well, to make them forget the distance that separates them from those who are dear to them.

17th November, 1917.

Chère Monsieur S—:

You have read of the battles of the English in the waters of the Yser. Although we are not in that region, we are equally poorly situated. I assure you that our rôle becomes more and more difficult. Each day we become more attached to our brave *poilus* because of the difficulties of existence which we meet. Unfortunately recent events do not seem to favor us, but we cannot doubt the issue. It would be wrong to think thus of our allies and in particular of the efforts of your great nation. Nevertheless you must realize that events do not appear joyous. After the Bulgarian treason, followed by that of Greece, we have had the Russian defection, and now this attack on Italy.

It is not modest on my part, being a part of it, to recall all that the French Army has done on the different fronts. But it must be admitted that, like the Boches, we are always there when things are going badly. At the time when

Russia, Roumania, and Italy struck great blows at Austria, the Boches arrived to fill up the holes. We resemble them a little now. When Belgium, Serbia, Roumania had difficulties, our flag appeared. When the English front was flooded last fall, we were there. Now we are with the Italians. Surely, as with all departures of the troops, a tear glistens in the corner of the eye, but each has a bright smile on the lips.

In this moment among the great hours we are going through, truly we have terrible worries, but not a word of discouragement from our brave men. As our physical forces decline after these months of suffering our strength of morale seems to gain in front of increasing difficulties. If sometimes we let ourselves be overtaken by worries, caused by political agitations, we quickly realize that these situations are not comparable to ours, and that there is never but one enemy—the Boche. From him only come all our miseries and our torments.

At this moment I have good news from home except from Pierre. No progress in his condition, and the request I made to the Prefecture with the view of obtaining his admission in the Medical Institution has as yet had no answer. During all this time he suffers and the days pass.

I think that never has the responsibility of being the head of a family appeared to me more crushing than now, never have I felt the weight of my little family so heavily as in this moment, not even when they were in the hands of the Boches. I suffered then because of their absence and worried about their existence, but now, on seeing them back again, and only after the greatest of efforts, settled so very modestly, in a little better health except for Pierre, I understand more than ever how they will suffer the day I may disappear. I tried gently to put to my wife in imagination such a situation, for I believe it a duty in order that the reality may not be too cruel and the consequences too hard.

Berthe and Henriette work quite well now, but their backwardness caused by their captivity troubles them always. Each week they write me a good letter and reply to questions I ask them. This occupies me a great deal and pleases them, because that which comes from their papa is to them precious. Berthe wrote me the other day: "Your *permission* ended much too quickly. You were helping me so much with my work. Now I have an examination to take at school and I do not know enough."

23d November, 1917.

Cher Monsieur S—:

The *communiqué* has just come telling us of the success of the English near Cambrai. I immediately departed to congratulate one of my *poilus* whose family inhabited Masnières, one of the little villages reconquered and intact. Next I asked for him an exceptional *permission*, permitting him, according to the instructions of the English Army, to go and see his family.

The Boches to show their disappointment have torpedoed us copiously. That only ended about an hour ago. Ordinarily during a bombardment I can sleep or continue to occupy myself with my little duties, but to-night I had the presentiment that they were not going to content themselves with a simple bombardment. They tried a *coup de main*, that which the English call "a raid." All my little world was ready for them, even those who were authorized to rest themselves, and the Boche left four of their number among us. With us there was not a single scratch, only one had to have a little sport and throw several cases of grenades. It is a very good way to limber one's joints when one is stiff. You see the Boche serves us for various purposes. There remains only to-night to go out and search for the pieces of Boche and to bury them. That is

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not always done by the Germans. Last year I had to bury the Boches killed between the lines, but nearer their lines than ours. They have no respect for their dead. Each time when it is possible for us, we do it, because we consider that all the ground up to their lines of barbed wire belongs to us. They must have realized to-night that the ground up to our lines did not belong to them!

That which gives us pleasure in the new English offensive is that the villages are intact; and that the Boche has not had time to repeat his crimes, as in his strategic retreat on the Somme last April. This new method is going to worry the Boche very much, because they will be obliged to hold immobile behind all their front strong reserves ready to parry each new attack. The method of long and minute preparation has the inconvenience of giving warning of an attack. The French, as well as the Boche, are generally warned of an offensive on a given point by the frightful shelling that precedes it. These are military considerations which perhaps will not interest you, but by them we gain back our little country where life can begin again rapidly.

Some time ago I guided a *poilu* who came, hoping to see again his house in this vast desert near which we were stationed. In spite of the

fact that I was guided by a detailed plan of the village, we wandered for more than two hours before determining which was his house and then only thanks to the communal wells; he knew that his house had the third well beyond that of his village. You understand that everything must have been swept away not to be able to determine which were houses and where were the streets. Remember also that the material of the demolished building and much of the rubbish is often carried away for the needs of the army.

I want to tell you a little incident lived through yesterday afternoon. I departed in the morning on duty on horseback and according to my custom rode across country. I went to the quarters of my Colonel, who invited me to *déjeuner* after the service questions had been settled. About one o'clock I went back to my horse and I fairly *caracoled* at having been admitted to the table of my great chief. I was opposite a little hillock and therefore in supposed security when a shell burst in my direction, then another, and still others. Suddenly there were eight terrific detonations at my left. If I had not had a horse already greatly fatigued he would have reared and fallen over. Without knowing it I was passing in front of some batteries of French artillery which the Boches

were trying to locate. Thus for a few minutes I was under a circle of fire. It was very impressive. I was happy to have experienced for a few minutes sensations unusual for an infantryman. Nevertheless I was quite content to come out of it.

29th November, 1917.

Chère Mademoiselle B—:

I think that this time your desires have come true. The bundles arrived last evening, and although very curious as to their contents I waited until this morning to open them. I cannot say I was greatly surprised, for I am now a little accustomed to being spoiled, but I was profoundly touched by all that the bundles contained. It is necessary for me to say, in order that you will excuse me for having opened them both, that my captain and my comrades presided over their reception. Following the logic which I have already explained to you in a previous letter, we hold nothing in reserve for the future. So, in spite of my insisting that the opening of the second bundle should wait until Christmas, my captain pointed out to me that I could not possibly charge myself with such a possession in moving from one place to another. That was true, but it seemed

to me I was breaking your confidence by not following your instructions, and I preferred to tell you about it.

If your good mother and you know how to spoil me with delicious things you also know how to give me great pleasure and great good. It would never be possible for me to express to you my gratitude. By a coincidence it has become very cold this morning. Someone remarked to me that you were like the good fairy of ancient stories, sending a warm sweater to cover me. I am certain that if your mother had seen me in my warm knit sweater she would not have believed me so old, for I was like a great, joyful boy. It is necessary for me, too, to thank you for the socks, which are so warm and useful here. They will be welcome, because we are again in the swamps. As to the other things, I marvelled at them, and at the thought you have had in sending me all these utilities. The knife is marvellous and is the admiration of every one. That which greatly interested my comrades were the two packages of lump sugar. Every one wondered at the thought that presided over the choice of the little articles,—the coffee, condensed milk, etc.

As you may easily imagine, it was necessary to open a box of dainties, the dry almonds and

the ginger, and we made some of the delicious George Washington coffee. Our captain had a search made for a bottle of wine, and, as he charged me to present to you the thanks of all our little mess, I asked him to raise his glass in your honor and also that of your great nation on the occasion of your festival of Thanksgiving. After having distributed to each one a little piece of the ribbon of the United States colors we pinned them on to our various coats. After that we raised your little flag and we all rose and saluted you as well as your family. I address to you from the bottom of my heart my most sincere thanks for so much goodness. More moved than we wished to acknowledge, we have just separated.

I am sure that this evening one of us will carry near to the Boche the remains of the box and its wrappings. We will leave a note explaining that in spite of the submarines, these dainties came in one month from our great Allies to the French trenches. Perhaps they will think it was your splendid soldiers who brought these things to spoil us, but we will arrange it so that they cannot fail to understand. Have you read the descriptions of the capture of the first Boche by the American troops? The Boches could hardly believe their eyes when they saw your men.

I thank you very sincerely for all your good wishes, and I beg you to accept mine equally sincere for the New Year. It is perhaps permitted for me to hope that, thanks to your nation's great aid, we will see an end to the terrible scourge which is slowly consuming us. The news lately seems to be actually good on all sides. Our friends at Cambrai have been disturbed of their firm title, and we hope that the taking of this city will oblige the evacuation of Douai, which would free Lille.

I have been disturbed several times, but I hope that the Boches will permit me to finish my letter.

I forgot to tell you that I have ornamented the sweater with a little end of ribbon of your colors, which is sewed in the middle of the chest, near the point of the collar. By the same mail I have written to the house, of the surprises you have sent me once again. The other day *Madame G—* scolded me by letter because she believed I had omitted to reply to you. She does not write much, but she is none the less grateful for all the attentions you have given us. She charges me to present to you her most sincere wishes on the occasion of the New Year. In transmitting them to you I beg you to submit them to *Madame S—*, to whom I have written by this same mail, to *Monsieur S—*, to

whom I owe a letter, and to *Monsieur George*. Perhaps the year which begins will hold for us the gift of being reunited or of letting us meet one another. It is my dearest wish.

I am obliged to end in great haste. In the expectation of hearing from you and renewing to you the expression of all my gratitude, accept them with my *bons sentiments et mes meilleurs salutations*.

Henri G—.

6th December, 1917.

Here in France one has been a bit worried by the Russian events, which turn like those of a melodrama. In Italy, in spite of the heavy attacks which our leaders expect, one sees the situation with calm and confidence. For the new year we would have wished to hope that it would end with us back at our hearthsides in the midst of our families. I believe that that is asking too much. One counts on the American nation, and we know that she will not spend her energy until she is ready. One can in this hope find strength to hold against many attacks. It is hard and painful, but we will hold.

20th December, 1917.

Chers Amis:

Here several whole days have passed and I ought to have written to thank you for all that I have received from you, but I have been terribly busy these last few days. We have been taking a course with flame-throwers, that which the Boche calls *flammenwerfer*. I tried to take several photographs, which I will send you later.

Then I had to return to Verdun with the widow of one of my comrades, to take her to the cemetery where her husband rests. I need not tell you that these are sad duties which friendship obliges one to perform. I knew that my friend wanted tremendously to know the corner of the earth where lay her poor departed one. Having asked for two passports from the *État Majeur* of the army, it was permitted me to take her there as she desired, and I was able to visit again the graves of the other comrades whose families had charged me with their care. Unfortunately it is not possible to have you read the letters of my friends, but it would be hard to find a Frenchwoman more courageous in her grief, and I ought to tell you that the other day she gave me a tremendous lesson of courage. As for me I could not hide my sorrow, while she, calm and strong, accepted the loss, however

cruel, which she had experienced. These are the true women, yet her life is completely broken.

Returning to the trenches after this short absence I had the great pleasure of finding four bundles from you. The first arrived was of recent date with a little word from *Monsieur S*— with his Christmas wishes; two others dating from September; and the last to arrive was, I think, of the end of April, marked Los Angeles. As says a French proverb, "Everything comes to him who waits." It is certainly one of your boxes sent last spring and following its non-appearance supposed to be submarined. My comrades had already opened the boxes and made a little hole in the contents. That is well understood and agreed to by me. It is the custom that when one of us receives a package we may open it in case of absence of the owner, for fear of perishable things. That is not the case with the delicious things you send. You know how to choose that which will not deteriorate.

Many thanks for all the useful and agreeable things on the part of my comrades, and on my own account. I am enclosing a little card of thanks which my captain begs me to send you. We have left a large part of the bundles for Christmas Day, if that shall be possible for us,

for at this moment one is preparing material for a *communiqué*—that is to say, one is bombarding the Boche copiously, preparatory to a raid, which will without doubt take place to-night. At the hour when you receive this letter numerous raids will have been carried out. Perhaps this one of ours will not have been worthy of a mention in the *communiqués*, but that does not really interest one—the principal thing is to be able to give one's commander information on who is opposite us.

You cannot doubt that the question is very grave at this moment. We are going through a period when each is anxious as to what will happen next. The Russian treason is truly a black point against us and it is certain that the Boche will attempt a great effort before the entry into line of important contingents of your countrymen.

One expects continually a great German attack. Will they succeed? I am not willing to believe so. But a heavy blow is always possible.

I have seen recently a civilian who has just come back from Germany, where he was held as a prisoner, and he told me that the economic situation is not good and that by spring it will be desperate. In May, 1917, they cut the green crops to consume them at once, and when the

harvest came it was made exclusively for and by the army. Thus the population cannot be happy. It will be necessary for us to bear the great blow for which one is preparing, and perhaps by next summer there will be a happy solution. But who knows from here what is really going on over there [in Germany]?

The papers are not interesting at present, and to avoid being bored I do not read them. All the same, as in each great war of the past, in whatever country it has taken place, there are always unfortunate things going on in the rear of those who fight. Those who are the authors of these things are not worthy of a thought. We have but a single purpose—to fight the Boche. It is of grave enough importance that just now one should give all his attention to attaining this end.

There are moments when one ought not to think of the discomfort in which we live. One must not look at one's self after a night of painful guard duty, when one's *capote* is stiff with frozen mud, the face green and splotched with cold. But if a ray of sun appears, all the face relaxes and becomes almost smiling, an expression which the arrival of a torpedo or a shell cannot take away. In spite of all that is hard, one does not want to complain, but nevertheless it is the fourth winter.

Many thanks for the congratulations for our brave *poilus*. They are truly splendid, and we love them well, because they are worthy of it. How many of us have awaited impatiently for the papers these latter days, hoping that the English will have pierced on towards Cambrai and hoping above all to see their own country. It is almost harder to bear than a bombardment.

I must not continue in this way or you could misjudge me and believe in a loss of morale, which is not so. *Mais que voulez-vous?* I am under the blow of the loss of good comrades, and the cannon which thunders lets one anticipate of a new *communiqué*.

I end in renewing to you the expression of my sincere thanks, in sending you the cordial salutations of *Madame G—*, who is in better health again as well as the children—to which I join my salutations, equally sincere.

Very cordially,

Henri G—.

2d January, 1918.

Cher Monsieur S—:

It is not possible for me to let this day end without writing to you. The year began yester-

day, and I wish to renew to you the most sincere wishes I form for you, your family, and your country.

I received Christmas Eve your good letter of the 27th November, a package of illustrated magazines, and the third bundle from *Madame S—* for Christmas.

To tell you what I owe in the way of thanks to your family is impossible. I do not know how to express myself to show you my gratitude. Your very interesting letters and those of *Mademoiselle B—* are always a veritable feast. To tell you of the delightful hours we spend with the illustrated magazines is also impossible to describe. I do my best to translate the *résumés* written under each illustration, and among my comrades I am asked to explain each picture. The letters are read many times, and when one of our comrades comes to see us I am expected to give him explanations on the United States.

Christmas Day we were in open line. Little or no shelter, only the officers having a hole not much larger than that of a terrier. I was able to have gathered several pine branches with which I tapestried the walls of an *assez grand gourbi*. When I say "large," that represents the capacity of half a railway carriage, in which was already a bed and a table. On

the table was a microscopic fir-tree all covered with ribbons and naturally with our flag and the little flag of your country. We had put as a contribution the preserves and *friandises* and cigarettes of the latest bundle, which arrived the night before as if by enchantment. I assure you that if the wireless could have communicated to you our words, you would have often heard your name pronounced.

At our little mess every one speaks of you, as if we had all known and seen you. When a comrade has been absent, on his return he asks, "*Eh bien*, has one any news from America?" If not, one says the mail is delayed. If yes, it is necessary to read it. The other day the Colonel passed by and said to me, "I must hurry and return to my quarters, for I have not been able to take the time to breakfast this morning and I am very hungry." I offered him a *gaufrette* to still his hunger. "Oh, it is true," he said to me; "you are the spoiled child of good people. Give them my thanks and express to them my sympathies."

Some time ago I had the occasion of dining in company with two of your splendid soldiers. As soon as they saw me they wanted to talk, and were very happy to see me take an English-French dictionary from my pocket, by the aid of which we were able to converse. What was

their satisfaction of seeing in my *képi* a little *cocade* of your colors, as well as in my notebook. They were a corporal and a sergeant having a leave of three days to visit the city where I was. The next day they saw me in the street and came to salute me.

I am chattering of insignificant things and I have not congratulated you on the trouble you are taking with your new work at N—. I beg you to accept all the wishes which I form for its good success. I am now very certain we could shake each other by the hand and call ourselves "allies" as well as "friends"—our cause is yours and yours is ours.

At present one is going through a period of nervous tension. We are at bay, keeping good guard and trying to find out at which point the Boche is going to hurl himself, for try to pierce our line he certainly will. It would be wrong not to recognize his deeds, such as they are. Certainly neither the Italian defection nor the Russian treason is an aid in our game, but I firmly believe that French breasts will know how to bar the route to the Boches long enough that a strong American concentration can be made which will finish the party.

We have still a great effort to furnish. I am not at all of the opinion of that *Monsieur* who appeared as if he were very well informed, repre-

senting a great American paper, and whose sensational article of ten days ago entitled "France is not bled white" you must certainly have read. He contested our losses, etc., etc. Officially France has mobilized 15 per cent. of its composition, and no other nation has come near to that number. We are not exhausted physically nor enfeebled morally. On the contrary, at the approach of a new danger all the heads hold themselves up and the necks stiffen, but it is not for nothing that we have always borne the greatest efforts and the hardest blows,—Verdun, le Chemin des Dames, etc.—there have been only the French—and many have remained on the ground.

I do not know whether the papers have told you that the Boches have tried to fraternize on our front as on the Russian and Italian fronts.

One morning in our sector an officer and a Boche soldier without arms, raising a white flag, presented themselves. The officer of the *secteur* presented himself and demanded of the Boches that they surrender. They made known their refusal and made it understood that they had come simply to talk. After having got in touch with the artillery—for I ought to tell you that one saw numbers of Boches in the first advanced line—the officer, refusing to surrender, was killed, as well as his following,

at the moment when a well-adjusted barrage of 75's transformed the curious Boches into little pieces. It was very impressive to thus kill a Boche *hors de combat*. He was perhaps the victim of what his chiefs had told him, but it was the only way to reply to advances of this sort. The general commanding that region has moreover warmly congratulated the officer on his initiative.

I wrote you at the beginning that I did not want to let the day end without writing you, for I had promised myself to do so yesterday, but frankly I had not the spirit to write.

I was bothered by *le cafard*, that villanous little beast who only attacks the morale. It was because it was a painful day. To know one's family were not very badly off, it is true, but not to be able to hinder one's self from thinking that perhaps they would not have you any more at the end of the year; to know whether one would return to one's house, to one's hearthside,—all that is an agonizing problem. The courage does not lack, but neither do the bullets, shells, and gas.

Mais que voulez-vous?

Mademoiselle B— told me of having read of the *citation* of the regiment. I do not know if I have told you what is our nickname in the army. After the terrible combats of the 13th,

14th, and 24th September, but above all the 24th, one of our leaders christened us the "division of tigers"—and you know that such as men do, such they are. Also, now all our brave *poilus* feel themselves under the obligation to do always more and more to remain worthy of being called "tigers." I must tell you that they will do their best to conduct themselves as such.

We were formerly "defensive troops," that is to say, firm for holding a conquered or menaced position by reason of the middle age of our men, and the calm temperament which belongs especially to the North of France. We are now classed with the *troupes d'Elites*, such as the colonial troops, and the active troops made up of young elements and especially trained for the attack—the title is enviable, but onerous.

This evening, if I can, I am going to write to *Madame S—*. She must know how much I regret not to be able to correspond in her language, to chat often and in a friendly way, and to thank her for all that she has done even when it is to make a pair of *chaussettes boiteuses*. (The socks were of uneven length.) Be good enough to tell her that I shall receive them with the heart and not with the eyes, and shall be too happy at receiving them not to learn to limp with one leg to preserve the equilibrium.

I must end for the moment, because I have to busy myself with the changing of the clothes of the *poilus*. Following the bad weather there has taken place a change of belongings—vests, pantaloons, shoes. It has been necessary to use ready-made garments of average size, without knowing the size of each man, or what number of clothes or shoes fits him. It is not the least gay moment of the day. With the good humor which the *poilu* shows, it is curious to help at a change of belongings. If the *capote* is long or short, one knows how to explain what is the reason, and how he resembles the client of the first tailor of London.

I hope that my letter finds you in good health and in the midst of your well-installed courses, and be good enough to accept the kind regards of my family, the sympathies of my comrades, and my cordial salutations.

Henri G—.

14th February, 1918.

Chère Madame S—:

I have been spoiled again—what delightful times one can spend with these splendid *illustrés*! Each one tries to decipher them with the aid of his dictionary. Life had a “*succès fou*,” but the large pictures in *Country Life*

made every one exclaim in admiration before their beauty and their finish. If you could have seen us, four or five groups of officers near the lamp with the same magazine. Each one gives his advice and his manner of understanding. It is one of our best pastimes. I am certain that the magazines pass through at least fifty hands. You can thus realize how many people are made happy. Many thanks once more.

I wish that the news of my family were better. My wife is very weak and she no longer seems in as good health as during the first months of her return. She writes often of her restless nights, of her nightmares. Always it is the Boche who worries her. I do not know if I wrote you on my return from my last *permission*, that I had often heard Pierre and his sisters cry out in their dreams about the Boches. I am happy to go to them to-morrow for ten days, and I shall try to find out if they have not still hidden from me some misery which the Boches caused them. On each leave so far, I have learned of some new horror,—first, the accident to Pierre, the wounding of my wife by a shell; later, of her illness. What am I going to learn this time?

Berthe is becoming very intelligent and thoughtful. She often writes me very delight-

ful little letters, and I believe that she will soon catch up in her studies with the children of her age.

Beauvais,
4th March, 1918.

Chère Mademoiselle B—:

Your long, delightful letter of 4th February reached me here at the hospital. It will not surprise you very much, perhaps, because I have now become a pillar of the hospital. This is what happened.

The 24th January I wrote you that I departed to a hospital near Verdun, where I did not stay very long, for they did not look after me much. The 14th February, on my leaving there, I told you of my departure *en permission*—I had hardly reached home when I became again very ill and was taken to a hospital in Beauvais.

I ought to tell you at once that I am better now, for I am being very well cared for by a good doctor and splendid nurses. That which helps my treatment is that each afternoon my wife comes to keep me company, and Thursdays and Sundays the children come with her. You see that I have nothing to complain of. The treatment will be quite long, because of the trouble with my heart. When I am better, and

can leave, I shall be sent to Amiens to be operated on for something in the throat, but that ought not to be serious. Following that, I expect to be sent to a town especially installed, both from a medical and climatic point of view, to finish setting me to rights; and then I may be able to rejoin my regiment. I wrote to my colonel to excuse me for being so often absent, and telling him that, being well cared for, I seriously hoped not to be too long in getting free. He replied to me that under such conditions he would be happy to keep me on in his regiment. I am very pleased, because you understand that we all love our regiments. It does not matter what one is, one has one's chiefs, one's friends, one's *poilus*; that is the spirit of the country. Often one knows the families of one's comrades and it is hard to be separated from them.

I started out by telling you at once of my health, but I ought to have thanked you for the lovely magazines received lately. *Life* is always very amusing, but *Color* is superb. I have just been spending some delightful moments looking at them and trying to decipher all the inscriptions. Happily you have translated a great part of them, and that is much more interesting for me than working out a word-for-word translation. When I had finished reading them, I lent them to some other sick officers,

but the one to whom they gave the most pleasure was an English Tommy who does not know a word of French and who can talk only with the doctor, and even then not much each day. This poor unfortunate had thus nothing to read, and he was completely happy when I had your magazines sent to him. You would have been pleased to see the manner in which he expressed his satisfaction in reading something which he could at last understand. I understand how hard it must be to be a stranger alone, and in a hospital. There are also some Portuguese and Italians in this hospital. Aside from visits which their comrades who are in the city make them, they cannot understand an entire sentence.

I am always very interested to read of the food restrictions imposed by your government. If in France we had acted that way long ago, there would have been a less serious crisis; as it is, it is only four days since one has been forbidden to make pastries.

Of the events of war I shall speak little. You must now know as much as we. You know that the first United States battalions have done well recently. It seems the Boche is worried about your aid. In spite of that, I believe his offensive will be violent and hard.

Rennes,
28th March, 1918.

Chère Mademoiselle B—:

I am very ashamed to have let three weeks pass without writing. There have been various reasons which have prevented me from giving you news of myself and my family, but I wish to thank you at once for all the delightful letters which have just come.

My last letter was from the hospital in Beauvais, where I was well cared for and had the pleasure of seeing my family each day. *Hélas!* it was too good to last.

The approach of the Boche offensive necessitated the evacuating of all the sick and wounded who could be moved from the hospitals situated in the zone of the armies. Beauvais came under this ruling, and I was consequently packed into a hospital train, one lovely morning, for an unknown destination far from the front. It was not only leaving my family which made me sad, but having to leave *la zone du front* as a *malade*. In 1916 after Verdun I was also sent to the interior, but then I had been wounded. I do not know if I can make you understand that it is considered a little degrading for a *combattant* to be sent back ill. Here I am being cared for to-day, more than three hundred miles from the front, while my comrades fight. But

if all the various treatments go well, I hope to return to my regiment sometime after the end of April. I am impatient to be again with my comrades, in danger certainly, but also in a position of honor.

In your good letter of January 27, you enclosed a newspaper clipping about *le Père Cabanel*, and you told me of the pleasure you had had in hearing him lecture. In my turn, I have sent the article, and an extract of your letter expressing your warm appreciation of him, to some good friends I made during my stay in Alsace, where *le Père Cabanel* was stationed with his "blue devils" for a year and a half. It must be easy for you to understand how such a splendid Frenchman would please the Alsations. I ought also to tell you, that in that country one must neglect nothing that will combat the Boche spirit.

I do not know whether *le Père Cabanel* told you that, following great attacks, it is not at all rare to see the Catholic chaplain going over the battlefield in company with the Protestant pastor, both of them giving their religious aid to the dying, regardless of their faiths. We had a splendid chaplain, but as he was old, one often saw him going about on the arm of the pastor, who was young and active. It was touching in its simplicity. In general, all the

religieux at the front have been admirable for their bravery, sincerity, and tact.

I remember in the attacks at Bois de Chaume, in September, a young officer near me was mortally wounded. As he was still on the battlefield the next day, the chaplain, who was going by, approached him to say some words of consolation. My comrade, who was not a believer, made an effort and said, "*Monsieur l'Aumônier*, I am not a believer, but I am going to die happy because I have done my duty." Our good chaplain replied, "Permit me, my friend, to shake your hand, because you are an honest man." These are the little things which make one admire them.

A little while after that we were sent back to rest billets, with orders to let the men amuse themselves according to their tastes, and for many this was to drink, to blot out the nervous excitement of the hard hours. Our chaplain, without orders, went through each *cantonnement*, and as every one loved him, he was quickly surrounded. Then, without saying a single word of religion, he gave a little moral lesson, easy to understand, but great in the manner in which he explained that having conducted themselves as bravely as they had done, they had no longer the right to lower themselves, but, on the contrary, ought to be proud of being true

men on whom the high command might count, and that, being conscious of the strength of their characters, they ought to consecrate themselves to the service of good.

Unfortunately he died soon after, of typhoid fever contracted following great fatigue. I know that before dying, he complained that he who had so often escaped death on the battle-fields should have to die in a hospital.

You say you have read a translation of "*Le Feu*" by Henri Barbusse. If you remember some notes I sent you in 1917, some of them entitled "*La relève*," you can compare them with the passage called "*La descente*." You will understand it when you realize that until June, 1916, I was in the 18th Company of which he speaks.

28th March, 1918.

Cher Monsieur S—:

I have hardly the heart to write at this moment, but all the same I cannot put off thanking you for the good letters and words of encouragement you have written me. That is why to-day I turn to you, for we understand each other, in spite of the censorship restrictions.

You will have read without surprise at the end of the French *communiqué* of March 25: "The French troupes began on the 23d of March

to intervene in the battle on the British front. They have relieved a part of the forces of their allies, and have begun fighting on their own account in this sector," etc., etc. It is true! It is splendid! Thus, what I wrote you a little while ago is confirmed.

I do not think this is the real battle. It will begin elsewhere. The French *poilu* expects it elsewhere and awaits it coolly. We will go through still more black days, but we know that your nation is on the horizon, and the army which held at Verdun will know how to hold in Picardy—or elsewhere.

And while my comrades fight, here am I a sluggard at the hospital, and still ill. I cannot bear to think that my comrades are under the Boche shells, while I am tranquilly in a bed far from the cannon! But alas, all my rage and all my impatience can do nothing but retard my cure.

If the Boches keep on advancing at this rate, in three days they will be at my house again. I await with anxiety each day's *communiqué*, for that of to-day let me think them about 50 kilometres off. But I must not lack confidence in my comrades who are fighting!

Madame G— has great courage and is full of resignation. Though always anxious for her and the little girls, it is for Pierre I fear the

most, for I believe that if he were once again in the hands of the Boches, he would not come back alive. My poor little son is not the same, and I do not wish to have any illusions about his condition. I fear and I believe that he will remain definitely afflicted. I have as yet had no reply in months to my request for his admission into a school of mental education. As I have not the right to neglect anything for my dear little one, I think the *œuvre* where *Mademoiselle R—* is working could perhaps act and bring about a happy solution. We are very grateful to you for this new proof of interest in our little son.

Madame G— does not realize Pierre's condition, as she is always with him; but I see plainly that, although very gentle, he learns nothing. Please God, who has taken the intelligence of the son, that He does not take the life of the father.

THE END.





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