

February, 1915: p. 975

Two Letters From the Trenches

[From The London Times, Oct. 25, 1914.]

A Canadian officer attached to the British forces writes as follows on Sept. 27:

IT has been very fortunate for me having a recommendation to Gen. C. He said that he would welcome all the French-speaking Canadians with military knowledge that crossed the Atlantic. I keep my rank of Lieutenant and am attached to the — Guards, which does scouting, patrol, and reconnoissance duty in areas prescribed by the Brigadier. We have plenty of most interesting work, which suits me down to the ground. Nothing could exceed the kindness shown to Canadian officers by their English brethren. We are all one in aim, in spirit, and in that indefinable quality of loyal co-operation which holds together the British Army fighting against enormous odds in France, as it binds together the British Empire by bonds not less strong because they are invisible.

This afternoon we are taking a good sound rest at the house of a retired French farmer, who has three sons fighting in the country. He is as game as game, and says he is just holding things together until the war is over. He is 75 and remembers the horrors of the last war, in which he fought in the artillery.
* * * Our "look-out" men are ever on the alert, for we never take a meal

OldMagazineArticles.com

or rest altogether. Sentries and signalers are always posted before we dismount. The curé joined us at the farmer's house and we enjoyed an excellent repast, with the honor of two local gendarmes who had brought in a German spy caught red-handed robbing the house of a peasant the night before and attempting to murder her. The man was dressed as a French peasant. Upon him we found evidence that he was a spy. Summary procedure made it easy to decide that the sentence of drumhead court-martial was death. And here again is an instance of the extraordinary clemency of the French clergy. The curé pleaded that the spy should not be shot and the extreme penalty inflicted. So I consented (not being a man of blood) to the prisoner being sent to the nearest French military post, to be executed or not, as the General shall order.

I really believe that all of the evidence which crowds into me supports the charge that this is not a campaign which has proved attractive to the German rank and file. Prisoners we have taken say that they have no relish for the fighting. They have been well plied with drink, and seem to urge that drunkenness may be pleaded as an excuse for crime.