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ELY, ONE WHO SERVED \*\*\*

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# DINSMORE ELY

*ONE WHO SERVED*



*"It is an investment, not a loss, when a man  
dies for his country"*



CHICAGO  
A. C. McCLURG & CO.  
1919



Dinsmore Ely

ONE WHO SERVED



Second Lieutenant Dinsmore Ely  
1894-1918

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DINSMORE ELY  
*ONE WHO SERVED*



*"It is an investment, not a loss, when a man  
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1919

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## PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD

In the battlefields of France there are thousands of American graves; graves of our best and bravest; sacred places to which we shall make pilgrimage in the years to come and over which we shall stand with tears on our faces and with pride in our hearts. Our heads will be bared because the ground is consecrated; the last resting place of heroes who gave their young and beautiful lives for their country's cause.

Dinsmore Ely was one who gave. His was the Great, the Supreme Sacrifice. Never was Crusader of old inspired by higher and holier motives. In his letters home, which we have the privilege of giving to the public, there is revealed a knightly soul: the soul of a Bayard "without fear and without reproach."



BY DR. JAMES O. ELY

## MY SON

Of old Scotch-Covenanter blood he came.

Into the Presbyterian Church he was born, and at her altar dedicated to the service of his God.

Taken back, when four years of age, to the old home in the Pennsylvania hills, he was present at the Centennial Celebration of the church where his ancestors have worshiped for five generations.

Called on to say his little speech—I can see him yet—he marched bravely down the long aisle of the crowded auditorium, climbed up the pulpit steps, too high for his short legs and, facing the great audience, the childish treble rang out true and clear, as he volunteered for his first service under the banner of the Cross:

My name is Dinsmore Ely, I'm only four years old;  
I want to fight for Jesus and wear a crown of gold;  
I know he'll make me happy, be with me all the day;  
I mean to fight for Jesus, the Bible says I may.

Twenty years passed. His country called. Among the first to answer, he volunteered in the American Ambulance Field Service that he might secure immediate passage to France and go at once into active service. Arriving there on the fourth of July, 1917, on the sixth he volunteered and was accepted the same day, in the Lafayette Flying Corps.

Taking his aviation training for a fighting pilot in the French schools and leaving the last school in January, with the reputation of wonderful skill as a flyer and aerial gunner, he volunteered at once for service with a French escadrille, serving and fighting with it from January to April in the Toul Sector near Verdun, when his escadrille was ordered to Montdidier, then the center of the great German drive.

On reaching Paris, he was notified to report at American Army headquarters to receive his commission in the United States Army. Having received it, at his own request, he was assigned as a detached volunteer American officer to go into battle at once with his old French escadrille.

On the following day, in closing his last letter to his parents, he wrote, in a single short sentence, his creed as an American Soldier, and, all unknowingly his own epitaph, now carved in stone upon his grave in the cemetery at Versailles, the heart of France:

*It is an investment, not a loss,  
when a man dies for his country.*

Flying in his Spad to Montdidier, Death met him near Villacoublay.

In his poem, *To Whom the Wreath*, an appeal for the fatherless children of France, he wrote:

Give us to help beat back the Hun,  
But give the French the honor won;  
Pray God, we'll know when Death is done,  
That France is safe and Children's Homes.

Death is done, my Soldier Son, and you know, aye, you know, that France is safe and children's homes.

And the little mother (ah! well we ken, Laddie, you and I, how much she gave herself to you) sends you this message:

"Thank God I gave my boy to be a Soldier,"

and saying it, her face glowed with the pride of the mother whose first-born son, flying in the heavens, was transfigured before her eyes as he soared upwards into the presence of his God.

We'll nae' forget you, Laddie, and we'll be greeting you soon, but while we tarry here, sitting often alone by the fireside in the old home you loved, we won't grieve for you, Laddie, and if we are a wee bit lonely at times, we will open the treasure box of "pleasant

memories" you left us and let the joy of them fill our hearts.

YOUR FATHER.

*Winnetka, Ill., March 1, 1919.*



*Monday, June 25, 1917.*

O great day! O wonderful world! O fortunate boy! Can it be I sail for France—France, the beautiful—the romantic—the aesthetic, and France the noble—the magnificent? Yes, it is true. It is all real. The babbling crowd and gangplank and piled trunks and excited companions—the hissing, roaring, thundering whistle, the cry of shrill voices, the moving of mass, the joyous and sad faces, waving handkerchiefs, passing boats and docks, the Battery, Liberty, the open sea—and New York fades behind with the pilot boat taking back the last letters of frantically written farewells. The noise is past now; there is a strange silence as the gentle swell of a calm ocean comes to us; we become aware of the steady throb of the engine. People wander about restlessly with hands dangling at their sides. They know the past; they try to realize the present; they are ignorant of the future. We are on the great Atlantic, we are sailing to France!

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*Tuesday.*

Five-thirty found me wide awake, so I got up, and with great difficulty succeeded in making the *steward de bains* understand that I wanted a bath. They all speak French very fluently—just as fluently as I speak English. Well, I shall know how to take a French bath by tomorrow, or know the reason why. There were only a few on deck, so I had a good walk. Breakfast (*petit déjeuner*) was at six-thirty. Real breakfast comes at ten-thirty, but one eats so often that it is too tiresome talking about meals. The real topic of conversation is seasickness. It is enough to make anybody sick. Everyone looks at everyone else and at themselves in the mirror to see if they can find or create symptoms. The ocean is as smooth as glass, and still they talk. If I am to be seasick, it must come naturally. Darn if I'll create my own atmosphere. The boundless blue is the most beautiful and serene outlook imaginable. It is great. Already I am at perfect rest. After breakfast I went right to sleep on the deck. At nine there was a Y. M. C. A. French class on the hatch cover, and we joined them. It is a "blab" school in which everybody yells in unison with the leader. It is very funny while your voice lasts, and remarkably instructive. It gives confidence in pronunciation. There are a lot of people outside of our party whom I know. Probably more will turn up. I have not met all our own men yet.... Well, there is time to burn. The day was mostly spent in lounging about. I did not try to make any acquaintances. Dave Reed and I were lucky enough to get chairs. He is the "salt of the earth."

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*Thursday, June 28.*

We had a preliminary life-insurance drill today, which consisted in our assembling in our proper positions on the deck, and then going to dinner. Rumor has it that on the last trip this boat had its rudder shot off and that our captain sank a submarine. Yesterday a freighter passed and they kept our guns trained on it from the time it came in sight till it sank away to the rear. The Germans are using such boats now to sink transports. We are not allowed to open portholes, and the lighting of matches and cigarettes is forbidden on deck at night. This sounds like war. From the time when I first read *Treasure Island* and *Via Crucis* I have envied those who lived in the ages of pirates and crusaders and Indians. I felt that they faced real hardships and fought real foes—in short, lived life to its fullest—while we, raised on milk and honey, were deprived of the right to face our dragon and bear our metal. But behold! Here we are facing the greatest foe of civilization in the greatest war of Christendom—a war not merely of steel and brawn—but a war on and over and under the seas; on and around and through the earth—a war in which plants and animals and all that is animate take part—a war of physical energy, mental versatility, and worldly resource taking equal part. Here the war god is taking

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the world at its prime—a world thrilling with the vitality and enthusiasm of achievement. He is taking this world which for thousands of years man has labored to cultivate and promote, and is marring and crushing it and sending it hurtling back through the ages to another hopeless, obscure beginning, and we are insects upon its surface. Each one of us gambles with Fate, putting ingenuity against the laws of chance, to see if he will be crushed as the good old world rolls down the slope of progressive civilization into the murky vale of barbarism. And we live in this age. If we die, it is for the Cause. If we live, it is to see an era of remodeling which will be unparalleled. Maps and boundaries, governments and peoples, religion and science—all will be reconstructed. Terms such as “international law,” “humane justice,” “survival of the fittest,” “militarism,” “monarchy,” “culture,” and—who knows—perhaps even “Christianity,” may be laid away on the shelf as no longer practicable.

And, oh, the outcome! Will the lucky ones be those who go or those who stay? We are told that without doubt we go into transport driving. Me for aeronautics. It’s no use, I cannot think of anything else. It’s what I am best fitted for, and it is the way I was meant to live. Stake all—spend all—lose all, or win all—and that is as it should be.

As per father’s advice, I am reading a history of France. On my own hook, I am reading a *Reserve Officers’ Handbook*.

This morning we had setting up exercises on the foredeck. This afternoon, a doctor of some kind or other gave a lengthy discourse on the elements of philosophy. It was cloudy, but warm all day, and the sunset was beautiful. We gain half an hour a day on the clock. At this rate, we will be over in nine days if the weather continues.

Good night.

*Friday, June 29, 1917.*

This is really Sunday afternoon, but I want to keep up the bluff of seeming to write every day. As a matter of fact, I do not think that a diary should be written every day just because the person has resolved to do it. Anything so written is bound to be lifeless and uninteresting. As a catalogue of events, a diary would be monotonous reading. As an outlet to thoughts, it should be spontaneous. When events of importance take place, they will be incentive enough to write. This day has really been lacking in events—let it go at that.

*Saturday, June 30.*

There are some sad French birds trying to sing. It sounds like the first rehearsal of a ragtime opera, the cast being depressed by the experiences of the night before. I cannot grant them much.

Well, today we had track meet on board. Good exercise, entertainment, and time killer it was. First came the three-legged race; then the sack race; then the Japanese sword fight; then the cock fight; then the bar and jack fight; and finally the tug of war. Dave Reed and I had the three-legged race cinched when I, like a poor simp, started to go on the opposite side of a post from him and we fell in the final. I lost the sack race and won the Jap sword fight. I also won the bar and jack fight. They made me captain of the M. I. T. tug of war, and that is why we lost, because I was the hoodoo right through. The thing I did was the only one they forgot to award a box of candy for—that is my luck—but it was great exercise, and I slept better than any time yet.

A pretty fair wind is coming up. They have put two men in irons I understand; one for insulting a lady, the other for being drunk. There is far too much drinking to please me. I had my porthole open last night, and a wave slushed in and soaked my bed. This “rocked in the cradle of the deep” must stop for the present.

*Sunday, July 1.*

And the strange part about it is, that it seems like Sunday. The Lord made the water so rough that we almost got seasick. I do not

know whether it made people more or less religious. I didn't go in, because the fresh air seemed better for seasickness than a sermon would be. The waves were dashing over the prow and tossing buckets of water up on the deck, so I got on my waterproof outfit. You know, there is a system to the waves. The longer one watches them, the surer one gets, but it's with the waves as with human nature. The laws governing them are so complex that one cannot discover them in a single short life. There was a good singing festival in the evening.

Good night.

*Monday, July 2.*

We have entered the danger zone. The life boats are swung out; the guns are uncovered, and the men beside them ready. Passengers are requested to sleep on deck with their clothes on and life preservers near at hand. The day is clear and calm and excellent for submarine fishing. This evening as the sun was setting, two whales spouted on the starboard sky line—get that “starboard.” Some claimed it was a sea battle between two submarines; others mentioned water spouts. A few of the *blasés* who were nearsighted, said it was imagination. Everybody was a trifle nervous.

The people down in the steerage have great times. We sit up and watch them play buzz and elephant, and when the idea of the game is grasped we imitate them. Buzz is played by three men standing in a row. The middle man wears a hat. He puts his hands up to his mouth and buzzes like a hornets' nest and then slaps the face of one of the other men. The man who is hit tries to knock off the hat. If the buzzer ducks quickly, the hat stays on. It is hard to describe, but fun to watch. The result is a good complexion.

Today, I made a pencil sketch, assorted my letters of recommendation and catalogued them, and read fifty pages of history. Never have I been content to do so little. Each day I approach nearer to perfect idleness by doing half as much as the day before, but at that, I am getting in better condition all the time.

Last evening at ten-thirty I strolled aft and looked down on the main deck below. The moon was shining dreamily on the smooth, billowy ocean, and there was a faint trickle of water at the prow. As our ship cut its path in the gossamer, phantom couples glided about on the moonlit deck to the soft, tinkling music of the ukuléle; gentle voices and soft laughter made you know the phantoms were real, yet it was all so like dream fairies dancing to a lullaby. It was one of those scenes which you recognize on the instant as a treasure in the scrapbook of memory, and you hold your breath to drink your fill at a single draught, that the impression may be perfect.... After the dance we took some exercises on the horizontal bar and then turned in on deck. Sleeping in the moonlight is great if one has the strength of intellect or fatigue of body to keep the mind off those who dwell in the moon. Each heart recalls a different name, but all sang *Annie Laurie*.

*Tuesday, July 3, 1917.*

Well, today was the day a submarine was sighted about a mile to port at three in the afternoon. It submerged before any shots were fired, but the passengers on deck saw it and the captain swung the boat sharply to right and left. Everybody was pretty much excited. All day the calm surface of the ocean has been bespecked with drifting boxes, kegs and spars from ships, which have been sunk in the vicinity lately. Two dead horses drifted by. We are in the Bay of Biscay, and due to arrive at land in the mouth of the Garonne River at three tomorrow morning, and at Bordeaux at six in the afternoon. Today I have written ten letters, three days' diary, have made a water-color sketch, and done twenty pages of history. To think we are to be in France tomorrow! Why, we are so close that we could row to shore now if the blooming Huns didn't shoot us in the life boats.

But I don't believe they'll get us.



We slept out on deck in a fast wind. We had a fight with the steward because he wouldn't let us bring our mattresses down on deck. We slept fitfully during the night, for danger was imminent, and at three o'clock we were awakened by hushed excitement. A little sail boat pulled alongside and the pilot boarded us. We had come to the harbor mouth and lights showed the promontories which marked the mouth of the Garonne River. Slowly we wended our way through the mine fields as the dawn broke through the haze; still we were not safe until the net gates of the harbor were pulled behind us. When the day was really with us, French soil was a welcome sight on either side. France, wonderful France! I went down and bathed, dressed in khaki uniform, packed my baggage, and then came out to enjoy the sights. They more than fulfilled all my hopes. The harbor was fairly full of all manner of boats, of which many were old, four-masted, square-rigged schooners. The shores were beautiful. A little town, Royan, nestled on the shore, its stucco tile-roof buildings ranging up from the water in picturesque terraces. Spires and towers protruded above the sky line of trees. Along the beach were beautifully colored bathing canopies. The bay itself was an olive-green. We stayed arranging our baggage and then started up the river. The countryside on either bank was as picturesque as an artist's dream. It is the claret land of the château country, home of the world's finest wines. Wonderful villas nestle up on the crest of wooded hills and the long rows of vineyards sweep down the slope to the little peasants' farm houses on the river bank. These little farm houses with their small windows, low doors, and red-tile roofs are the most picturesque imaginable. The building material is a warm yellow stone or stucco, mellow with age, and the tile of the roofs is stained, weathered, and mossgrown, but most beautiful and wonderful of all is the natural environment. It seems as though nature had absorbed an education in art from the art-loving French. The trees in the manner of their growth have caught the spirit of refined cultivation, and grown in a limitless variety of oddly picturesque forms which want no training. A long line of stilted poplars with bushy heads march up the roadside over a hill. A few gnarled and hump-backed beeches squat about the little ferry wharf, and to the side are well-rounded clumps of maples and beautiful pointed boxwoods, while in the distance great bare-legged elms stand close together, their great arms waving great masses of foliage toward the sky. But it is all beyond description. It looks as if it had been laid out to the master-plan of a great landscape gardener. As we go up the river people run to the bank and wave and cheer from under the trees. We pass neat, newly built factory towns which house German prisoners in long barracks. Farther along, yellow chalk cliffs loom up on the left. Along the ridge are wonderful châteaux—not an extravagant show of wealth as in America, but substantial old country seats. At the base of the cliffs are little villages and the cliffs themselves are dotted with doors and windows where the peasants have cut cave dwellings.

But here we approach Bordeaux. Considerable manufacturing is done in the suburbs, but there seems to be little smoke. Every factory has an orchard and garden in its back yard, and rows of poplars hide its dump heaps. The river is lined with docks and as we come to where the large boats are anchored a burst of color in the form of flags of all nations greets us, and what a pleasant surprise—the Stars and Stripes float on the top of every mast. France celebrates the Fourth of July, and from the ferries that hurry about us cheer after cheer came up, "*Vive l'Amérique.*" The sailors of our ship formed a snake dance and went all over the decks behind a silk flag singing *The Star-Spangled Banner* and then the passengers joined in answer with the *Marseillaise*, whistles shriek and fog horns bellow as the gangplank shoots out. Then down the gangplank, behind the gorgeous silk banner, march two hundred and fifty khaki-clad Americans and draw up four abreast on the platform.

Crowds lined the streets that lead to the railroad station. American flags waved from windows and people cheered and clapped as we sang our marching song, *Smile, Smile, Smile*. In the hour before train time we raided the eating houses in a riot, as sailors are supposed to do when they first reach land. Then we piled into our special train and with little delay were off in a cloud

of conversation. First attempts at sleep were not very successful, though we were not crowded on the train, and everything was very comfortable. At twelve we opened our prize package luncheons, and each contained a can of sardines, a can of horse meat, a roll, a package of raisins, nuts, prunes and figs, mixed, and a bottle of lemon pop. After lunch I stood for two hours looking at the landscape. The moon was shining, and it was almost as bright as day. Everything looked so clean and orderly. Neat little villages, all white and mystic in the moonlight whizzed by. Then I went to sleep on the coat rack, and woke up in Paris.

#### *Thursday, July 5, 1917.*

"So this is Paris!" It was the general exclamation as we stepped off the train. In a few moments the crowd had dispersed, and Reed and I found ourselves lost. By patient endeavor, however, we succeeded in reaching 21 Rue Raynouard. It is a fine old residence, its grounds covering several blocks, situated in the very heart of Paris. It is older than the United States, and its artificial terraces are covered with aged trees. The lawn is now covered with tents and barracks, and it is a delightful home for the ambulance men. There they come to spend their leave and to rest. We spent the day in arranging and adjusting ourselves, and lack of sleep for the last few nights sent most of us early to bed.

#### *Friday, July 6, 1917.*

And now things begin to move. At seven this morning we were told that we leave in the transport division for the training camp at seven tomorrow. We must pack, buy the necessary incidentals, and see Paris in twenty-four hours. Well, I did all my packing in two hours and had the rest of the day to carry out my other plans.

Yesterday I was talking to another fellow interested in aviation. He has been here some time. He said Dr. Gros, who is head of the Ambulance Medical Advisory, is vice-president of the LaFayette Flying Corps, and is the man to see. He gave us our physical examination this morning, and I made a date to see him at one-thirty this afternoon. He gave me an examination for the aero corps at two, and I passed it with ease. At three I was released from the service of the American Ambulance Corps by the help of a letter from Dr. Gros. At four I made out my application for the LaFayette corps, and so in a day was accomplished what I had allowed six months for. My plans go like clockwork. Fortune runs ahead of me, and everything turns out better and quicker, but just as I surmised it would. Dr. Gros is a personal adviser to the flying corps, and he is a wonderful man. He talks to you with the interest of a father and the intimacy of a friend. In asking his advice as to the advisability of my making the immediate change, he, a member of both organizations, said that every American's duty was the place of highest efficiency, and that if I were fitted for aviation it would be wrong to waste my time in the field service, and he also said it was for me to know if I were fitted for the higher service. Well, I have known that for some time, and the American ambulance officials were very cordial in their releasing me. They said that aviation was undoubtedly a higher service, and that they would be glad to take back into their service anybody with my spirit. (This was not a compliment.) It is what I have wanted to do, but it keeps me from being stranded in case of some unforeseen failure in aviation.

I still cannot believe the extent of my good fortune. While in Dr. Gros's office I talked with a man who came over on the *Chicago* which arrived four days before the *Rochambeau*. He said Al Winslow and his friend had come over on that boat, and that they were staying at the Hôtel Cécilia. As I could not stay at 21 Rue Raynouard, I immediately went over and signed up for a room at fourteen francs a day—a room and meals, for two dollars and eighty cents. I did not see Al, but I found he was there. That evening the "Tech" Unit took dinner with Mr. Lansingh, who came over to establish Technology Headquarters in France. After dinner we went down to some *Folies*, and took in some speedy Paris life.

I stayed last night with the bunch and saw them off this morning. They congratulated me on my nerve, and said they wished they could do the same. There was much picture taking, and good-byes. I hated to part from the bunch, for they were a fine set of fellows, but there are good friends everywhere. After attending to several things, which they were forced to leave undone, I took my things to the hotel. The Cécilia is a clean little family hotel occupied by Americans. It is in a nice neighborhood, within half a block of the Etoile. The Arc de Triomphe of Napoleon is in the Etoile and forms the hub of a wheel from which radiate many beautiful boulevards and avenues. I will send a circular of the hotel. It seems that it will take a week or ten days to hear from my application. What could be better? Had I remained in the A. A. C. I should have left the city immediately. As it is, I am forced to remain ten days and get an introductory insight into the wonders of Paris—and it has its wonders. To further my luck, I find that the LaFayette Fund pays twelve francs (two dollars and forty cents) on our keep while we are waiting acceptance. That makes food and lodging cost me forty cents a day. As soon as we are accepted, we receive a commission of two hundred francs a month (forty dollars) and all expenses.

Maybe all things come around to those who wait, but that does not prove that those who seek shall not find.

Sunday.

I slept late and then took a walk in the Bois de Boulogne. It is beautiful—a park which resembles a forest in the density of its foliage—a wondrous, natural feeling retained in spite of the finish of it all. I made a sketch of the Arc de Triomphe, and a woman came along and charged me two cents to use a park bench.

In the evening I met a French gentleman who walked about six blocks helping me look for a store to buy a map of the city. Most obliging! His name was Crothers. He told me of an English club that I would probably enjoy, and said if I needed help to call on him at his office. I invited him around to my hotel without smiling. The movies were all right. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* was playing.

Monday.

This morning I did some shopping. A shirt, a pair of garters and another sketchbook. Then I walked all over town.... I walked some twenty miles or more in a vain endeavor to understand the plan of Paris and to see Notre Dame. I found the cathedral about four-thirty, and went in. I cannot describe it, but it was surely wonderful. The exterior was a trifle disappointing, but the interior—mammoth piers, soaring arches, gorgeous stained-glass windows—all gloomy and magnificent—all solemn and religious. The hollow echo of footsteps, the distant passing of flickering candles and the low chant of monks—no wonder the Catholic faith is with us yet. With such monuments and such mystery, there will always be those to sign the cross and bend the knee in reverence.

Tuesday, July 10.

It was my plan, to go to Versailles today, but Mr. Lansingh called up and asked me to send a package to one of the boys. By the time I had attended to that the morning was half gone, so I returned to the hotel for lunch. In the afternoon exercise was wanted, so I went out to the Bois de Boulogne and after walking round the pond, hired a boat. In coming up to the dock, I had noticed a young lady, very American looking, gazing at me with a twinkle in her eye. When I looked again she smiled, as one glad to see a friend. I said, "What's the matter? Do you speak English? Come on for a ride." She said, "Oh, the children will talk about it." She was very refined and pretty and very English, and it seems she was a governess for these French children. She would not come until I had taken a turn around the pond. Then she did come and was very entertaining. She told me what she thought of French,

English, and American men and women; how the different societies seemed to differ. It is the most sensible bit of conversation I have had since the voyage. I am going to take advantage of being away from home to meet all the various kinds of people. Such incidents are the punctuation marks of travel.

*Wednesday, July 11.*

The morning was spent in writing my diary. At lunch a couple of the men asked if I were going to Versailles, so I joined them. We went direct to the Tower, where a guide was waiting, who had made arrangements to visit an aeroplane depot. We took a hurried view of the grounds, and then by taxi went to the Buc Farman Depot, where aeroplanes are made and turned over to the government. The guide introduced us to three aeronauts, who showed us about and ended up by asking if we wouldn't fly across to another depot in some new machines. Did we refuse? Well, it was wonderful. Sitting in the long, dragon-fly body, there was a moment to think. Then the pilot gave the signal for the blocks to be taken away, and like some animal the machine snorted and quivered as if unable to realize it was released. Then there was a bound; a crashing roar of wind passed my helmet; a blur of ground as we sped along the turf; and then suddenly all vibration stopped. The ground flew away beneath, and we mounted. I had thought to see things diminish gradually, but the earth *fell* away. We skimmed a grove of trees. I glanced up at the pilot to see how he controlled, and when I looked down again I noticed a team of white flies drawing a match head along a crayon mark. It was a team of horses on a country road. Then the sense of speed was lost and we seemed to be drifting along like a cloud. That rush of air had been caused only by the motor. Then I saw our shadow cross a large field in three seconds, and I decided we were still moving. A design in the map below proved to be the gardens of the palace.

The great lagoon looked like a veined setting of lapis lazuli. Still we were going up, but there was no fear, no doubt, nor distrust. It was all wonderful sport. How could anyone think of it but as a sport? I was so elated that I almost missed the city of Paris as it passed beneath.

Then we came into some light clouds. Up there the sky line, the horizon, was made of clouds that seemed to encircle us at the edge of a crater, with the multicolored molten lava beneath. Then the plane began to rock, as on a choppy sea, and we encountered what they call "bumps." All of a sudden the engine seemed to stop. There was a queer sensation of having left something behind, and before I realized it, we were almost on the ground, having dropped two thousand feet in less than a minute. The landing was like passing from asphalt to cobblestone pavement in an automobile. We had been in the air twenty minutes, and had gone thirty-two miles. When I found that out, I felt like a wireless telegram. And then what did those cordial French aeronauts do but take us home in a taxicab and invite us to lunch with them at their homes next day. At supper we were the heroes, the envy of the table, and it was just luck that I was included in the party.

*Thursday.*

We landed at Versailles at 11 A.M. and were met by the aviators. My host's name is Louis Gaubert. He is a splendid, unassuming man. He took me out to a little country home, a few miles from Buc, where his wife and little three year old girl met us a hundred yards from the gate. Both were pretty and affectionate and thoroughly French. Gaubert himself speaks poor, broken English, which he learned in the States some years ago. He is the oldest living French aviator, and his wife was probably the first French woman in an aeroplane. They had a garden and arbors and chickens and dogs and rabbits and birds and a player piano and a Ford and trellis roses—in fact, everything that a man could desire. To be taken into such a home is to me the greatest favor. They were so free and hospitable and so entertaining. On our way to the aviation field Gaubert took his wife and mother-in-law and baby to the station to go to Paris. They let me hold the little girl going into the station, and twice she reached up and kissed me on the cheek.

It was surely a happy day. Again we went high over Paris on the cloud path, and again rode home in a taxi.

### *Saturday, July 14.*

Up at six to get down to see the great parade. A boy by the name of Bosworth went down with me. The crowds were twenty deep about the streets, so we went up to the sixth story of a flat and asked if they had room. They said their windows were full, but the man below had a large balcony. He took us in on hearing the words "American aviator" and treated us with the utmost cordiality. The parade was good, and enthusiasm ran high. As the soldiers passed along, the crowds threw them trinkets, fruit, and money. When it was over, we were unable to find a means of conveyance, and as it was too far to walk, we asked the man who was just getting into a Red Cross automobile with his wife, and an American flag, if he would take us up to the Etoile. He said "Yes" and again "American aviator" was the key. By the time we had reached our destination we had offered the lady flowers to pay for the ride. He had offered to take us out to Versailles as an afternoon ride. We had accepted on condition that he take dinner with us. We had dinner at a regular Parisian restaurant. As he talked fluently with his hands, I could follow his French, and then a strange thing occurred. A young lieutenant in French uniform with a more distinguished than strong face, came in with a rather doubtful-looking girl and sat down next to me. I could see the man's face. He seemed of good blood. He watched our new friend closely. While we were eating dessert our new friend was talking to Bosworth, the officer winked at me a warning, and leaning over said, in poor English, "Do not go with that man, he is a bad man." As we left the dining room I remained behind and talked with the officer. He said to come and see him, and we made a date for Monday. From then on I was on my guard. We had a very pleasant day, but our friend was so strenuously entertaining as to be tiresome, so I declined further engagements with him.

The gardens and buildings are very wonderful, and I am going out there more. I took a number of pictures and developed them in the evening. Both of my cameras are giving extraordinary results, and I am delighted. I shall not try to send my pictures or films home for the present until I make sure that my letters carry safely. I shall await with interest the outcome of my interview with the French lieutenant.

### *Sunday.*

This morning I went over and helped Mr. Lansing get settled in the new "Tech" apartment. It is a Technology Club at Paris, and a very gorgeously furnished apartment it is.

This afternoon I walked ten miles around that wonderful park.<sup>[1]</sup> They have great groves of Norway pine as large and straight and thickly distributed as the grove from which our cabin logs were cut, and right near by are oaks and beech and locust and bay trees, and under the pine trees is wonderful turf, natural and unspoiled by the needles.

Good night.

### *Monday, July 16.*

In the morning I did a little shopping, and then met my friend, Sergeant Escarvage. He spent two hours and a half showing me through the National Museum of Arts and Sciences. There were experimenting offices and laboratories for testing material. He showed me the gas-mask construction. He speaks a trifle more English than I do French, so it is very interesting each trying to make the other understand. I asked him up to the hotel for Wednesday supper. He accepted.

I like him very much. His superpolish seems natural. His friendship is sincere; his sympathy unusual.

It rained, and I read *The Dark Flower* by Galsworthy. His style is clean-cut and masterful. The story weighed on me. I walked ten miles and could not sleep. What this war does to people's lives!

My papers came today.

## Wednesday, July 18.

I spent the morning in getting some more papers signed in final preparation for going to Avord. We are to leave Saturday. In the afternoon I went down and saw the buildings about Napoleon's tomb. The tomb itself was not open. There were several Boche planes down there. They do not look any better to me in point of construction and workmanship than do those of the Allies. I think that rumor was bull.

Escarvage and I went for a walk and ended at the hotel. After supper he took me to the *Femina Revue*. He is interested in music and photography. He wants to help teach me French and insisted that I write to him in French and he would correct my letters and return them. He also said that when I come to Paris on my first leave I should stay with him at his apartment and we would go to the theater and to visit some places of historical interest.

## Thursday.

Again the morning was spent in getting clearance papers, the afternoon, in packing, and the evening in a good walk. The pictures I developed make the results of both my cameras very good and satisfying.

## Friday.

The day went slowly. I just waited around, read a little, wrote a little, sent a box of candy to the aviator Gaubert and his family, and slept.

## Saturday.

And we are off to the Front. We took off on the 8.12 from the Gare de Lyon. The trip was good and the country beautiful as ever. We stopped at a garlic hotel at Bourges and then proceeded to Avord where a truck met us and took us to the camp—and it is a wonderful camp. After registration we had a few hours before dinner to look around. The buildings are well built, the grounds are clean, and, outside of a few insignificant lice, the barracks are very comfortable and the grounds so extensive that it would take a week to explore them. They stretch away for miles on every side. Well-made roads lead to the various camps and here and there hangars form small towns. Motor cars and trucks carry the officers about and the troops of aviators are marching on and off duty—but most wonderful are the machines themselves. Imagine a machine leaving the ground every fifteen seconds! Do you get that? Four a minute! The air is so full of machines that it seems unsafe to be on the ground. The environment is lovely; the weather pleasant; the fields are covered with clover, buttercups, and red poppies. To those who can find pleasure in nature this cannot become monotonous, but all bids fair to be very pleasant. The first meal was very good, thanks to the numerous pessimists who had prepared me for indigestible food. From the first night I had been assigned to a barracks with a delightful bunch of men. The prospects are of nothing but the brightest.

## Sunday, July 22, 1917.

The day was spent in resting and becoming settled. I went to the station at Avord to get my bed, only to find that it would not arrive for several days. When I got home the bunch had gone out to the

Penguin field to make their first sorties. I hurried out and got there just in time to answer roll call, but we failed to get a chance, so we came back disappointed. We ate bread and soup at the *ordinaire* and turned in.

### *Monday.*

There was a lecture this morning on various types of aeroplanes. In the afternoon we went out and I had my first sortie in the Penguin. Well, it was rare sport. A Penguin is a yearling aeroplane, with its wings clipped. It has a three-cylinder motor and a maximum speed of thirty-five miles an hour. A person gets into the darned thing and it goes bumping along the ground, swinging in circles and all kinds of curlicues. It was thrilling and fascinating, but the conclusion derived is that flying is not one of the primal heritages, but a science with a technique which demands schooling and drill. It is a thing to be learned as one learns to walk or swim. It is necessary to develop a whole new set of muscles and brain cells.

### *Tuesday.*

I am reading a book on aeroplanes, which is of benefit in my technology training.

My second sortie today was not so good as the first, but I understand that that is usual. I saw a Nieuport fall and had all the thrills of witnessing a bad smash-up. We saw it coming for the ground at an angle of thirty degrees. It happened in just three seconds. In the first second, the machine struck the ground and sprang fifteen feet into the air; in the second it lit again and plunged its nose down; and in the third it turned a straight-forward somersault and landed on its back. It was over a block away, and as I was nearest, I reached it first. A two-inch stream of gasoline was pouring from the tank. When I was twenty-five feet from the plane the man crawled out from under it. Well, I had expected to drag out a mangled form, and it was some joyous thrill to see him alive. And he was cool—he took out a bent cigarette and lighted it and his hand did not shake a bit. The strap and his helmet had saved him. Everybody was happy just to know that he was not hurt. The machine had its tail, one wing, the propeller, and running gear all smashed.

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### *Wednesday.*

And this morning when the men came in from the morning classes they reported five Blériots and one Penguin smashed. One Blériot dove and turned turtle. Another lit in a tree. The other smashed running gears; and the Penguin ran through a hangar. Not long ago a Blériot dove through the roof of a bakery at seventy miles per hour. In all these accidents not a man was scratched—absolutely miraculous, but the conclusion is encouraging and reassuring, for it shows how much better the chances are than we figure on. I didn't get a sortie today.

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### *Thursday.*

No sortie today either. Went over to see the construction of the Lewis machine gun. Just before going to bed a machine flew over camp. A big white light and its red and green side lights—then suddenly, as we watched, a rocket shot out and downward in a graceful curve and burst three times in colored lights—truly a pretty sight, and as wonderful as the stars themselves.

### *Friday.*

We have a regular program now. We rise at twenty-five minutes to seven and have drill for ten minutes. It is just a form to get the men out of bed. Then I come back, bathe, eat a crust of war bread

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and read or write until ten o'clock, when the first heavy meal is served. Another form drill, lasting fifteen minutes, comes at a quarter past eleven. There is often a lecture at twelve o'clock, and the men are supposed to sleep from one till three. At three they may have another class of instructions. At five supper is served. At five-thirty the troop leaves for the Penguin field. We are there till nine-fifteen and return for soup and bread and jam at ten o'clock.

This afternoon I had my third sortie in the Penguin and I begin to feel at home in it. We have been smashing one a day lately—running gears or something.

I received my first letter from home since leaving New York. It was from father, written on June 28—just one month. I hope my letters home have not been so delayed.

Some of the boys answered an advertisement for *les marraines*, girls living in France who would correspond with boys in the army, so I made application. It will be interesting to watch the outcome.

Tomorrow I shall print my pictures and send some home. I have not taken many since coming here, because I figure that there will be so many more interesting aeroplane pictures offer themselves.

The French Government pays us twenty-five cents a day and I spend that on candy. I am getting an awful appetite for candy. I can hardly wait till the meal is over to eat some, though it isn't very good candy at that. It is because there is no sugar in the food, I guess.

### *Ecole d'Aviation, Avord (Cher).*

DEAR LITTLE MOTHER:

I am letting my diary slide for a few days and writing letters instead.... I do not care how often you people write to me. It doesn't matter much what you say—it is just the sensation of receiving letters. I had a letter from my *marraine* (godmother) yesterday. Some of the fellows sent their names and mine to the doctor who made introductions by correspondence to some of the well-to-do Parisians, and as a result I now have as godmother a lady of about fifty who has two married daughters. She is of French family, but was born in Illinois. She married a Frenchman. Her home is in Paris, but she is now in their country villa at Croix-de-Brie.

We have had much rain in the last week, and there has not been much doing. I now have seven of the necessary sorties required in the Penguin class. The classes are large, and the machines break quite often. That is why progress is slow. I think I am doing somewhat better than the average, but it is too early to tell much about it. I am anxious to progress faster, but one must wait his turn, and they say it is better to go slow. There is no reason why I should not make a good flyer.

YOUR SON.

*Tuesday, July 31, 1917.*

Now I have forgotten the last day and page of my diary, and so I'll just write today. Well, I got kicked out of my bed because the man whose bed I was using returned, and I had to go into another room because there was no more room in that one. I now have a nice new bed. That is the second time I have had to change rooms and roommates. Oh, well.

I have made a regular discovery. One of the boys has a whole set of Balzac's works. I shall devour them. I have read a book a day for three days now; all my spare time I read. The weather is too hot to enjoy beating about; also I do not want to risk being handed a prison sentence for being out of place. They have strict rules and lax enforcement, but they get men now and then.

I had a letter today from Gaubert thanking me for the candy and asking me to come to stay at his house while in Paris.

Oh, I have meant to say that nothing was ever better named than the comfort bag. In hotel or in camp it is equally good, and nothing is lacking. Marjorie's wash rag is the best I've ever had. I didn't suppose a knitted wash rag would be any good. Another thing that fills the bill is my suitcase. It is the best looking and lightest one I've seen on the trip. Maybe more of my equipment will be of use than I had thought.



August 10, 1917.

DEAR FATHER:

In reading *The Gallery of Antiquities* by Balzac, I came across this passage which made me think of your parting admonition:

Remember, my son, that your blood is pure from contaminating alliances. We owe to the honor of our ancestors sacredly preserved the right to look all women in the face and bow the knee to none but a woman, the king, and God. Yours is the right to hold your head on high and to aspire to queens.

I can say for the first time in my life with assurance that I know the honor of the family is safe in my sword. So much for my experiences—and I aspire to a queen.

Progression in my work is steady; the upper classes are so full as to retard our immediate advancement. Our class is an exceptionally good one. I changed from the evening to the morning class some days ago, and I find it was a good move. The morning class is better, and advances faster. I am reading all the literature on aviation that is to be had about camp. I wish you would communicate with the M. I. T. Aviation Department and get from them a list of the books that they are using there in the study of aviation. From this list strike out *The Aeroplane Speaks* by Barber, and *Military Aeroplanes* by G. C. Loening; also strike from the list all books published before 1915, and from the remainder you can judge what will be of use to me. They should not be so elementary as to be a waste of time, nor so technical from a mathematical standpoint as to be boring. Compact, reliable, up-to-date as possible information is what I want. If any of these seem worth sending, do them up in separate bundles and mail them at intervals of three or four days apart to prevent their all being lost. The less bulky, the more practical for my use. Mail these books to me—C/O Mr. Van Rensselaer Lansingh, Technology Club of Paris, 7 Rue Anatole de la Forge, Paris, France.

Mr. Lansingh keeps in constant touch with "Tech" students and communicates with their parents and with the Institute in case of accident. I will send my films to him and he will keep them after development. They are charged to my account and a set of prints returned to me. I will forward these prints to you. The films will be filed at the "Tech" Club of Paris. Any mail or cables sent to that address will be immediately forwarded to me, entailing about two days' delay. I have opened a checking account, and deposited 1,000 francs with the Guaranty Trust Company of New York.

August 14, 1917.

DEAR LITTLE MOTHER:

Nothing much has happened lately, so I have not been moved to write. You will remember I told you about getting a *marraine*; how she was born in Illinois, has two married daughters, lives in her country home at present, but will be in Paris during the winter months. Well, in her second letter she asked me if she could send me tobacco or anything else I might need, so I told her to send me candied fruit and golf stockings. They arrived yesterday. Say, but that fruit was good, and the stockings were the best I ever have seen. Dark brown, with a fancy top—not too brightly colored, of light and dark green. They are most too good to wear around here with my old khaki suit.

Most of the men are buying uniforms and thirty-five dollar aviator boots and eight dollar belts and all that, but I think it will be better to wait. If the United States takes us over, it will mean another change of uniform. Perhaps my uniform will come in after all. At all events, I'll have to buy a light serge uniform which will be cool enough for summer wear and dressy enough to wear when accepting invitations. They spend a good deal of money on clothes here, and dress pretty lively when they go to Paris. Around camp, though, there is no uniform or discipline. We wear black and brown leather coats; red, black, brown, yellow, and blue trousers; sweaters, flannel shirts; and green vests and hats ranging from sombreros to the Turkish fez. This is a division of the Foreign Legion, you know. All manner of strange people are to be seen here. The *refectoire*, called the *ordinaire* is the place where we feed, in the animalistic sense. A crowd gathers about the steps as meal time approaches, and clamors in a multitude of tongues.

There are carefully dressed Frenchmen, with sensitive features and dainty little moustaches. There are heavy featured Frenchmen, with coarse manners and rough attire. There are sallow-skinned Portuguese in dandy dress who have an air of dissipated ennui, and yet have a solicitous cordiality which makes them strange and out of place. There are dark-brown Moroccans and Turcos with red fezzes, Assyrian beards, and brass studded belts. The Russians, with their gray-green sweat shirts belted at the waist, their bakers' hats with highly colored diadems in front, and their loose black knee boots, stand aloof and talk little, but with vim. They somewhat resemble Irish in their features; and in the heart of the crowd, pressing close against the doors, as eager and clamorous and more rough in action than all, are the Americans, pushing, scrambling, elbowing, to be first into the *ordinaire*. Only their inexhaustible good humor prevents one from criticizing them. Once inside, there is a great scramble for the head of the table. Men jump up on the benches and step on and over the tables with their muddy hobnailed shoes in a vain endeavor to arrange themselves favorably. Then enterprising mechanics, who get one franc per person per month for their service, bring in stacked pans of food. These are large receptacles of a gallon capacity, and there is one stack to each table. In the top pan is meat—usually beef cut in chunks, sometimes tough, sometimes tender, always nourishing, never savory. In the second are boiled or baked or French fried potatoes, or beans or carrots, or *mélange*, similar to succotash. In the third and largest container is soup, which tastes better by artificial light, and is always the same. A weak solution of beans and cabbage and potatoes with scraps of war bread afloat. This is seldom tasted, and passes on from week to week until it becomes richer from many cookings, and is finally eatable. At the end of the meal comes the dessert, and it is the redeeming feature. Each man has a good big spoonful of *confiture*—apple butter.

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The men at the head of the table have heaping platefuls of food; those in the middle get theirs level full; those at the end are dependent upon the foresight and generosity of those above them. But the food is wholesome and clean, and if a man eats to live it will nourish him satisfactorily. For those who live to eat, there are high-priced restaurants just over the fence which are run with the sole idea of getting the soldiers' money.

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This morning an order was issued that thirty of the men in the Penguin class who have had less than thirteen sorties are to leave for Tours at two o'clock. That is another school. My changing to the morning class enables me to get seventeen sorties, so I remain here. I am glad for that, because it means starting to learn on a new kind of aeroplane.

I could not make the facilities for printing pictures here suffice, so I have sent the films to Paris. It will be a couple of weeks before I can send them to you. I have taken very few pictures here, but intend to take some soon. The country hereabout is very beautiful and fertile; the sunsets have been simply glorious. The country is moist and rich in color. I am not much pleased with the group of men in this barracks and will change as soon as there is a vacancy in the one I like, but I sleep and read and walk. I am reading *Catherine de' Medici*, by Balzac. It is rich in the history of Paris. Tell father to write me whenever he can. I wish you and father would get a little vest-pocket camera like mine and send me pictures whenever you can. I find that I have a passion for photographs. Those that I have I look at almost every day.

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It's good to hear that you are enjoying yourself at Black Oak. I hardly think you will be able to be miserable because Bob and I are not with you. Send any newspaper clippings of interest.

A man just came into the room with a rumor that sixty more men are to leave here in a couple of days, but does not say where they are going. At next writing I may be almost anywhere. Guess I'll scout around and get some pictures right away. Well, much love to you, Mother dear, and to father, and to everyone else.

Your loving son,

DINSMORE.

*Bourges (Cher), August 19, 1917.*

DEAR MOTHER:

Day before yesterday I got permission to come down to Bourges where the great cathedral of St. Etienne is. It is the third best cathedral in France, and is simply magnificent. I stayed till yesterday afternoon, and then returned to camp. Bourges is fifteen miles from Avord. Then I found we had *repos* and did not go to class till tomorrow evening, so I came right back to Bourges on the first train. I will have been in the town two days and a half—well, nothing could be better. The town is built upon gentle slopes which fall away from the cathedral in its center. Houses are here ranging from just before the war back to 1200 A.D., perhaps further. Hundreds of architectural treasures are hidden in its narrow streets. A town of 45,000, it contains more good architectural designs than Chicago. But the cathedral—oh, how wonderful! I went straight to it, led by its towers showing above the house tops, and when it came into full view I stopped still and held my breath. Ponderous, massive, standing elegant, magnificent, mounting upward, delicate, airy in the skies. It held me and pressed so upon my feelings. What was it? The wonderful spirit of endeavor and faith and love of a hundred generations trying to please their God. The genius of seven centuries bending its power to produce a single masterpiece and then the endeavor of one small human being to grasp all this and hold it in one glance—as the sound of a hundred thousand voices cheering their parting army. It made me want to cry. I walked all around it twice. I took pictures of it from every angle in case something should happen to it or me. Then I went in. Oh, why try? It cannot be described. No wonder they kneel. My thoughts whispered to each other in awe. Faint glows in rainbow hues from the gorgeously stained windows played in the distance among the forest of columns. Across the altar, which seemed like a dwarf shrine in a giant citadel six candles twinkled, as if to demonstrate the smallness of the life of man. There before the altar knelt a priest, small, with bowed head. Then there was a stir in the air, slight at first, but growing with rising and falling crescendo, and the monotonous drone of the chant echoed and reechoed among the columns till it filled the whole vault, and then died away into religious silence. I turned and mounted the winding stair into the bell tower, counting the steps—four hundred and six—four hundred and seven—oh, here was something that I could grasp and describe. There were four hundred and seven six-inch steps. The tower was two hundred and four feet high.

The fine old warden of the keys told me he couldn't take me over the place without a permit from the architect of the city, so I went to the architect's home, only to find him out. When I returned to the cathedral, disappointed, the old man said that if I would return at nine in the morning he would take me through. At nine in the morning we started. We started up the tower and branched off at one of the little doors into the clerestory that led all around the inside of the church nave. Here we saw the organ. From here we mounted a dark, uneven passage within the walls which brought us out to the lowest stage of the roof, where the bases of the flying buttresses rest. We traversed the gutter, which was really a promenade, to the choir end of the cathedral. Here again we wound up a circular stairs within a great buttress pier and came out on the little narrow stair cut right up the flying buttress span to the main roof. Here we entered another little door, and found ourselves right in the garret over the altar. Under my feet was the great span of the main vault, and over my head the original joinery of the great peaked roof. In the darkness of the garret we passed great old windlasses for lowering the huge candelabra which hung in the nave. We traversed the garret to where through a little door a shaky scaffolding led over a deep pit to the tower of the prison. Here, again, was a huge chamber lighted by narrow slits in twenty-foot walls. We descended again and at every landing was a narrow cell which came to a point in a small slit which admitted light and indentation in the stone on which to sit. It was uncanny. It was a relief to come again to the day, where the bright sunlight played upon gargoyles and grotesques hiding in the carved stone.

Such a feast of the imagination! I could sit down now and write a novel laid in the confines of that pile. Then a fellow whom I met and I went down and explored the crypt. There were unlit shrines and unaired vaults which ended by a wall one could not see over, and the air was cool and damp and so bad a match would not burn. We went out to breathe fresh air, and dream in the sun.

YOUR SON.

DEAR MOTHER:

I am so sore I've got to give expression to my feelings. You see, the truth of the matter is that I've been in the hospital five days with bronchitis, and though I am practically better now I have just heard that the doctor said I must stay eight more days. It will put me so much behind my class that I am furious. It all started with a stomach ache and high fever the day I arrived in Tours. They put me in the infirmary two days and then sent me to the hospital. I was pretty sick the first two days, but it's all gone practically. My temperature is thirty-seven degrees centigrade. But it is all bull. I shall be 2,000 meters in the air when you receive this. So it will be the height of folly to think of worrying.

Tours is a pretty town on the river Loire, and I am waiting to go for a swim the first time my nurse takes me for a walk. They have not brought in my suitcase yet, so I must still use this paper. I have a number of sketches to finish up when the suitcase comes. Also it contains my books. This is a good place to study French. One of the men here was in Salonica two years and now has been in the hospital eleven months with colonial fever. Another cannot talk above a whisper. They are all generous and all think every American is deathly rich. One of the fellows set up a box of *petits gâteaux* (French pastry), and I passed it around. As these cakes are a rare delicacy and considered quite dear, each man had to be pressed to take one. There is an English-speaking nurse here with a face like a blighted turnip. There is a gentle old Catholic Sister with great white wings on her hat, who is wonderful. She speaks only French, but she smiles in every language. I am getting a profound respect for the Catholic church.

Well, my suitcase came today and I am all cleaned up. I've finished two letters that were started, so guess I'll close this one with love.

YOUR SON.

DEAR FAMILY:

It has been quite a while since I have written you, and this letter must be a short one, but lots of things have been happening. As a matter of fact, there is a good long letter half written in my note book, but it is not here yet.

Well, in the first place, I spent three days in Bourges. It is an aged town, was once the stopping place of Caesar, has been twice capital of France, and is rich in architectural treasures of all ages. The best thing there is the cathedral of St. Etienne, which I think you will find pictured and described in the encyclopedia. I spent my whole time sketching and sight-seeing, and will be perfectly contented to live within two hundred yards of it for a month. Traveling alone is the best way to see things. There are more doors that a single person can pass through. I traversed much worn, winding stairways, and chilling passages, darksome. I saw cells and pits of torture of the Inquisition. The youngest part of the cathedral is four times as old as the United States. For the architect, it is a jewel; for the historian a treasure; for the poet, a dream; for the conqueror, a tomb; for the soul-torn, a haven; and a place of worship for everyone. A French nurse whom I met this morning said, "Why do they destroy the churches? The churches belong to everyone. They are theirs as well as ours."

It was fortunate I took the opportunity of seeing Bourges, for the day after I returned to Avord we were all sent here to Tours to another school of aviation, devoted entirely to Americans. There is another wonderful cathedral here. We are learning a little more about our prospects. There are both U. S. Army and Navy men at this camp. The conditions of this camp are infinitely better than at Avord. Sheets on the bed, much better food, tablecloths, china, a piano, and better system.

DINSMORE.

*September 4, 1917.*

DEAR MOTHER:

It is rather tiresome sitting in the hospital when I am not sick in the least, but to suggest leaving is to insult the man with authority

to release me. When he finally decides to let me go, it will take three days for the red tape to be carried through, which permits me to return to the Ecole d'Aviation. Meanwhile, I am losing several hours of flying. The good September season is just opening, and the days are delightful. We are given permission to leave the hospital and spend a day wandering around the historical city of Tours. I have been making pencil sketches and water colors, and it would really be very enjoyable if I were not so restless to get to work. You see, the time is a rather critical one. Anything is liable to happen; the United States Government may take us over. They want monitors in the States to teach flying, and if we are taken over we will probably be sent back without any fighting experience to act as monitors in the training school over there.

This is all very indefinite, but I do not like to get behind the bunch or be away from the camp at a time when these changes may be made; still there is no use fretting and I suppose things will work out all right. Anyway, I am not sick, and they must let me out pretty soon. I am on good terms with the chief doctor, who is a painter, and took an interest in my sketches and paintings. He offered to take me out to his house and show me his collection. I do not know when he will do so. I am trying to develop my general culture while there is opportunity, and have read six of Balzac's novels, historical and otherwise. There is a wonderful chance to study architecture, and I am keeping up my sketching in water color, as well as studying a little French. Unfortunately, I left my history book in Paris, but will get what I can from Baedeker, and all the time I am storing up energy to use when the time comes. As to this prospect of the members of the Foreign Legion returning to America as monitors, most of the men do not like the idea of returning without some fighting experience. I am of that turn of mind. Men going back would be so much more able monitors if they had served on the Front, and they would be much more contented to return. There would be no doubt in my mind that I would remain in the French Foreign Legion if it were not for the fact that at present they are making monitors first lieutenants, with high pay, and a respectable office. Reason dictates that this will be changed very soon. I believe the men who are already officers will not be put back, however. If this should be the case, the time to enter United States service is now. Money is not everything, but three thousand a year is not to be ignored. This is all conjecture, and I have not made up my mind as to what to do, and shall not until fuller and more reliable information is given out.

The life here in the hospital is very pleasant. We wake at seven and have a little French breakfast of bread and coffee in bed; then we lie awake and read or doze for an hour or so. Rising at eight-thirty, we clean up and make our bed and read or write letters till lunch, which is a heavy meal served at eleven. By permission from the doctor, we are then at liberty to go out and spend our time as we please until five, when we eat again. Of late I have been going over and watching the full moon rise on the river Loire after supper; I retire at eight or nine.

The French have a strange custom of closing all their windows at night, but Americans are permitted to have one window open in their end of the room. French medical authorities are convinced that two open windows in the same room are very unhealthy and dangerous.

We have a good time wandering about the quaint, narrow streets, where strange people peer out of small, low windows, and undersized doors. The houses are so old that different materials and workmanship of a dozen repairs give their façades a mottled appearance of many centuries, which suggest a strange collection of antiques within. This is carried out by glimpses through windows whose shutters are hanging aslant or thrown open. Within are seen old four-poster beds with canopies and feather mattresses which are round and swelled up as if inflated. Wrinkled old women with queer caps squint as they peer out, while their hands rest in embroidery. Elsewhere, little low passageways open into crammed little courts, with uneven tile floors, scrub trees, and a half-open circular stone staircase. Natural flowers and grass grow from the moss-covered tile roofs.

Washing hangs from front windows, and people come out to empty their wash water and their refuse in the street gutter. Cats abound. I hope the sights and experiences of war will not wipe out all these quaint and pleasant sights which make Europe what it is.

DEAR FAMILY:

Things are speeding up. I'm out of the hospital. Came to the school Friday. Found I had about the best bed in our barracks and was in the smallest class with one of the best monitors—more luck. I am an hour and a half of flying behind the other fellows, but that is not bad.

Well, the hospital did not cure my bronchitis. That, however, is nothing but a chronic cough which will mend here better than there. What it did cure, however, was my distaste for my fellow-countrymen; the cure was absolute, and of greater value than my physical cure could have been. My, but it was good to get back with the bunch again. All my old interest in people has revived, and I am more than content.

And I have flown! Wonderful. Oh, it was great. Saturday evening I went up for fifteen minutes as a passenger. Then Sunday morning we went up on my first ten minute lesson. When we were a hundred meters off the ground and had gone a quarter of a mile, the pilot gave the controls over to me and rested his hands over the side while I drove entirely alone. It is more simple than driving an automobile because there is no road to watch. A glance at this side, a glance at that, to see that the wings are level. The throttle is set full at the outset and forgotten till you descend. There is a speedometer to watch and that is all.

Of course this is just driving in a straight line through good air. Ascent is dangerous; landing, an art in itself. Every curve has its corresponding angle of bank, and the angle varies according to the direction of the wind relative to line of flight. Perfect carburetion is essential at all altitudes, but that all comes later. An understanding of air currents and their effects must become instinctive; so, after all, the statement that it is easy applies only where someone else is there to do the worrying and look after the important details, any one of which stands between the here and the hereafter. The pilot said I did well on my first two sorties.

Monday I went in to paint with the doctor, but he was going to an Allied musical fête given by the hospital for the reeducation of wounded soldiers, and so I accompanied him. Like all charity affairs, some of it was very boresome, but there was some very good music and one singer from the Opéra Comique of Paris. I shall go another day to paint with the doctor.

This letter has been written out on the field, and as it has been continued through three classes I had better mail it. Have not heard from home for ten days or more. Had a couple of letters from my *marraine*.

SON.

*September 11, 1917.*

DEAR FAMILY:

From the sky the world is just as beautiful as from the ground, but all in a different way. Fields and farms become checks and plaids in varied greens and browns. Stream necklaces and jeweled lakes bedeck the landscape around. Horizon lines jump back ten leagues, and clouds swim by in droves. The setting sun may rise again for him who mounts to fly. Man, groping about in great fields assumes his actual size and importance in the universe; instead of being the egotistical, dominating element in an unimportant foreground he shrinks to an atom, and the eternal infinite engulfs him. I can imagine a future life as a soul speeding through space, existing upon a sensation, a boundless view, and a breath of air.

The flying is progressing well. The monitor said tonight that he seldom had seen a pupil so apt, that I was doing well and would take up landings tomorrow. Twice today he let me take the aeroplane off the ground. I've had an hour and fifteen minutes of flying now and will soon catch up with the class, as far as ability is concerned. Our monitor is a wonderful teacher and a splendid flyer.

I'm just as busy as I care to be. Up at five o'clock; work, six to ten; lecture, ten to eleven; repose to three; lecture, three to four; work four to nine. I haven't had time to mail this letter, but I'll do it tomorrow.

Well, I'm simply wild about this life. The country is beautiful;

châteaux abound; pretty farms—but I must go to bed.

Good night,  
DINSMORE.

One thing I forgot to mention—the machines we are running now take all the strength a man has to operate one of them in rough weather. After a ten minute ride, my right arm and shoulder aches. The story of an aviator landing and fainting from physical exhaustion does not seem as far-fetched as it did.

DEAR FAMILY:

My first solo ride was this morning. It consisted of going in a straight line for half a mile at a height of two hundred feet. Everything went finely—no fear, excitement, nor difficulty. Oh, how I am going to love it! I am inclined to believe that the nervous strain of driving will be less than that of driving an automobile after I have mastered the technique. Imagine being lost in the clouds, having to fight for one's life in a storm! Great stuff! One man had his engine stop at low altitude, went into a wing slip, and smashed his machine to atoms. He bruised his knee, but goes up tomorrow. Some of the final tests consist of *petits voyages* about the country—a couple of hundred miles. This is the château country, and several of the men have been having experiences. One man's motor went bad and made him descend near a little town. He was arrested as a German spy, but on proving his identity was released by the mayor of the town. When he returned to his machine he found a Renault limousine waiting for him. The liveried chauffeur asked if he would favor the madame by taking dinner with them. He granted the favor, and rode back through the streets down which he had been led thirty minutes before by a *gendarme*. He came to a great château, was introduced to some twenty girls (guests) among which were six girls of his age, both French and English. He was given a room and bath and fitted out with clothes which belonged to the son of the house, in aviation service at the Front. It was three days before he could get his machine fixed. During that time he was the chief guest, escorting the hostess into the dining room, canoeing, pheasant hunting, motoring, and playing tennis with charming girls. He had a small car at his disposal, and a valet to attend him. They called him "Sammy" and urged him to return. It was the home of the Councillor of Gasoline of France. What luck! Half the men that go out have some such story when they return, but this man received the "aluminum lawnmower." It is everybody's hope to have some such trouble.

We are so busy now that I cannot write as much as I should like to. I am trying to keep up some other correspondence.

Your ever loving,  
DINS.

*September 14, 1917.*

DEAR FAMILY:

Major Gros of the United States Flying Division arrived here at ten o'clock last night and gave us a talk. We are given the choice of going into the U. S. Army as first lieutenants at \$2,600 to \$2,700 a year, or remaining in the French service. I shall change immediately. It is the advice of all officials, both French and United States. We are to be examined today, and certain papers are to be signed applying for service in aviation. In a few weeks we sign into the service if we are accepted; meanwhile we continue our training without interruption, being corporals in the U. S. Army until we obtain our brevet (pilot's license). Thereafter we automatically become first lieutenants and continue our training in French schools, in French machines, with French instructors. We are better off all around, and all well satisfied. Dr. Gros, an American doctor, is the man who gave me fatherly advice. We received two hundred francs from him for this month's pay from the Franco-American Flying Corps. Things are still turning out just as I had hoped—no worry, all happy, wonderful experience.

Thank you for sending the things. They will, no doubt, reach me in due time. There is nothing else I need, thank you, and most of the men are not in need. Everything will be supplied us by the U. S. Army. Already its organization over here is far superior to that

of the French. United States newspapers have much better war news than French papers. Incidentally, even France is not free from the graft hookworm, and rumors that float around here are just as wild and untrue as anywhere. My *marraine* sent me a box of nice candy the other day. It arrived just at a time when I was blue and a little envious of others receiving letters. When the candy came they were all keen to have a *marraine*, and refused to believe she was a married woman, and all that. It filled the bill, and the stomach.

The other day I did about a month's washing and saved about two dollars. Tomorrow I shall darn and sew on buttons. There are a few good popular novels around here and I am enjoying them. There is not time enough for me to go around and see the châteaux here. Extra time goes for sleep. My, but I am interested in art and architecture. As we go to our field, we pass along a great, tree-arched national road, past the entrance of an old twelfth-century château. Our field is some five miles from camp, and is entered by a country road which passes through an ancient vineyard, with big stone granaries, and a pond. We picked berries and pears about the borders of the field. Little children come out with baskets of peaches, plums, and pears for sale very cheap, and in the morning a woman who speaks English comes out with coffee, and marmalade sandwiches. That's our breakfast, and then we fly and look at the sunrise.

It's time to go to bed. I'll write more tomorrow.

*September 15, 1917.*

We are now taking our physical examinations. Mine has been perfectly normal; they found nothing wrong with my heart, and a special examination of my lungs (by request) showed nothing abnormal, though I have still a little bronchial cough. It looks as though we were to have a few days of rain. I can stand it for sleep. Just received my two hundred francs, and I feel rich. I am going to deposit it, as I have a hundred francs left from last month. I am pleased with the financial outlook. At the end of the war I'll have enough money to travel, or get married, or finish "Tech." If the war lasts long enough I may have enough for all three. If anything happens to me my life insurance pays for Robert's education, but there is no particular reason why anything should happen to me. I am not counting on it.

Say, I have so many clothes that they are becoming positively a burden. When we enter the U. S. Army in two or three weeks we will be provided with a complete outfit of U. S. Regulars uniform. When we have our brevet we get a complete leather uniform. My khaki uniform has not been washed since the beginning and is all covered with grease spots and "tacky" looking, but it is comfortable, and I saved two hundred francs by waiting. The sweater you knitted for me is doing good service—so light and neat inside a coat. It is very handy. That picture of Robert's is mighty good. Tell him to write to me. I just received my pictures. Printing is very expensive here, and the work is not very satisfactory. I hesitate to let them develop my pictures. Our time is filled now all right. I must sleep some more. That is one of the great requisites in aviation.

You might send me things to eat now and then. Dates, figs, candied fruits, fruit cake, candied pineapple, fig newtons, and salted nuts. They come through pretty well in about a month or so, and keep well. It is best to sew cloth around the package before putting on the outside cover. It's pretty nice to receive packages.

Your son,  
DINSMORE.

*Personnel Dep., Aviation Section, A. E. F.,  
45 Ave. Montaigne, Paris, September 19.*

DEAR FAMILY:

The above heading is the official address of the U. S. Aviation Section, and the one which you must use from now on. Yesterday I got a flock of letters—three of mother's, one of father's, one of Robert's, two or three others, and a bunch of the "Tech" magazines. The "Tech" has more news of vital interest than any



paper I see over here.

Tension is rather high in camp. Major Carr, when he was here, told the French lieutenant that there were 500,000 men in the States anxious to fill our places. Since then five men had been *radiated* (a polite French word for "fired"), for breaking machines. Everybody is frightened. The men had been sent up from our class, two and three a day. One man is in the hospital, one in Paris, and today the last two go up, so at present I am the only one in the class. The hospital put me behind all right. Though I should like to catch up with the other men and would be willing to take a chance, yet it is not the best way to learn. They say a "slow beginning is time well spent," and I am with an excellent instructor. I could not learn faster than I can with him, so it is for me to be content. The men that were *radiated* were men who had been sent up too quickly.

There is a bad fog this morning, so I guess we will not get any work. Many things interfere with aviation training. Sun makes heat waves, fog bars the view, wind makes it dangerous, yet we get a good deal of flying at that. When we are *lâched* (released) we have a machine of our own and go out and fly whenever we feel like it. That will be fine.

I went to Tours day before yesterday and had a swim. The Loire River is very swift, and it was all I could do to swim up it thirty feet. They have the natatorium floating in the river, and have it fixed with a strainer to hold the people in. I would like to swim down the river about ten miles, floating with the current, but it is against the law to swim in the open. Day before yesterday was the first time I've been swimming this year.

We have a great time in our barracks. Every night there are a number of rough houses. Last night we had a real fight. One vulgar, loud-mouthed fellow called a smaller man the forbidden name, and the little fellow lit into him. Everybody wanted to see the vulgar one cleaned up—and they did. After a couple of blows the big one clinched in the strangle hold, but the little one was a college wrestler with a neck like a bull. He squirmed around in a circle and nearly broke the big man's arm; then he punched the big one's face. They knocked over some beds and rolled on the floor; then they got up and talked till they got their breath. The big one was dissipated, and shaky on his feet. The light man lit into him again. Neither of them were fighters, but they meant well. The heavy one lunged with a hammer swing, missed, and the light man came in short and quick on his jaw. The heavy man reeled back to the wall, but came again and clinched before both eyes were shut. The little man went under, but it was only from weight, and he was on top in a minute. He rubbed the big one's face in the floor, and then let him up. Then the yellow streak showed up. The big one sat down on the edge of the bed, whimpering and holding his arm, which had been fractured. He said he wasn't licked, but had enough for the night. The crowd mumbled disapproval and went off to bed. A few gullible ones stayed to fix up the big man's arm. He cried like a baby. He hasn't shown his face for two days.

One of the fellows just tells me I have been shifted to another monitor who is very violent, so I do not know what the outcome will be. The fog grows thicker; we shall not work today. The greatest lesson of war is patience. There are many days in which we do not work. I am trying to use that time to rest and build up for what may come. The way things are run here prevents one from having a system by which he may utilize his time, so I work by inspiration. The time will come—and a long time it will be—when I must work by routine, so I guess it will not hurt to work by inspiration for a little while. My stay at the hospital must have done me good. I am in splendid condition, and very healthy and happy.

YOUR SON.

*September 28, 1917.*

DEAR FAMILY:

Everything is going fine, but slow. I was passed to the next solo class today and will be on my brevet work within a week, so I should be delighted—but I am as blue as the devil. What I want is to see and talk with a good, beautiful, splendid, charming American girl.

I am sleeping and eating like a beast. Made a little water color today; had a few letters from my *marraine*, but no one here has heard from home for weeks. I am going into town today, just for a change. It would be easy to get into a rut here. I love these little French pastries, and fill myself full of them every time I go to Tours. There is one place where you can get ice cream. Just imagine, and Tours once the capital of France! There is a great big old twelfth-century castle built by the Norman lords not far from here. I am going up and see it tomorrow. I must find some way to get around to these châteaux near here. Perhaps I shall take a week's *permission* after my brevet. If I do not break a machine I'll go back to Avord for Nieuport work, but I'm pretty good on landing, so if luck is with me there will be no difficulty. Robert's letter just arrived, telling me of long pants and hoping his brother is out of the crowd of unclean men.

YOUR SON.

*September 29, 1917.*

DEAR FAMILY:

Today I was called to the top sergeant of the U. S. Army here and presented with a telegram thrice forwarded from Washington asking after the health of one Dinsmore Ely. I reported that I was in the hospital two weeks with a slight attack of bronchitis, which did not confine me to my bed. After being reprimanded for the folly of mentioning such a sickness, I was dismissed. Where men are being killed at the rate of fifty thousand a month, note that it was a most absurd thing to clog official wires over the ailment of a private. Incidentally, it marked him as a pampered pet. Lately, Reno, the aviator, was reported dead and mourned in world-wide publication. He later entered a Paris bank to draw his account and return on *permission* to America. He will arrive before this letter. This goes to prove that absolutely no report can be believed. There are undoubtedly a great many aviators listed as dead who are prisoners in Germany. The only news you can rely upon will be from my hand. I am in perfect health now, and will continue to be as long as I live. You will hear nothing more in regard to my health until my obituary notice reaches you, and as that will not be from me, you will be foolish to put any trust in it. My letters will be most irregular and undependable, by accident or intention, so you need not try to guess my health from them. Also keep in mind that one blue evening may give rise to more dissatisfaction than a deadly disease. It has been a custom of the Elys to keep the wires hot when one of them had a cold. That must stop in war time. If you people are determined to let your imagination turn your hair gray, nothing on God's earth can stop you. In spite of the fact that I am an Ely, I am only one of the eight million men whose lives are worth the ground covered by their feet. If you do not believe unmentioned health is the best way to prevent worry, wait a year and see. You need not try to persuade me to keep you informed on my health. Meanwhile the war will continue as usual, I doing my part. Do not take this letter as curt, it is just entirely lacking in romance. I am in perfectly good humor; also I am thinking just a little clearer than my parents did when they telegraphed around the world in war times to find out if I had recovered from a minor attack of bronchitis. You must have the same faith in me to look after my physical health as after my moral.

The *Tribune* is coming and it seems good, but you would be surprised how little current events are touched upon here. What we crave most in reading is romance. The *Saturday Evening Post* fills the bill more than anything else. If you could send me a subscription of that for six months, it would be greatly appreciated. There are plenty here, but by that time will be sent to different posts.

I wrote to Robert today, and will probably write to him quite often. Wish he would find time to write to me frequently, at least once a week.

YOUR SON.

*Ecole d'Aviation, Tours, September 30, 1917.*

DEAR MOTHER:

Something pleasantly interesting happened today. Early this morning Loomis in the bed next to mine asked me if I would join him in a party with some friends of his. They were to come out to the school for us, so I borrowed a blue French uniform and stuff and dolled out as fine as you please. The friends came at ten-thirty in a touring car. The party consisted of M. and Mme. Romaine, who were our host and hostess, and Mlle. Gene Recault, and her future father-in-law. She was very pretty, charming, and entirely French. Her father-in-law, M. Vibert, was as jolly as a youth of twenty-five. They were all so cordial and generous, and entirely agreeable. We went to Tours and called at a music store, where Mlle. Gene purchased some music. Then we went to the hotel at which we had spent the night, and she gave us the treat of a wonderful voice. It was too strong for the small salon, but when she lowered, it was delightful. She was the leading pupil in the National School of Music at Paris, and withal, modest and charming. We proceeded to a café in the Rue National where we had a good breakfast at twelve-thirty. The meal was lively, and we were able to take an interesting part in the conversation, thanks to the sympathetic courtesy of our companions. M. Vibert was full of pranks and humor, so at the end of the meal I started to use a nutcracker on a peach, and Mlle. Gene took it from me in consternation and showed me how the French peeled a peach and cracked nuts; so I cracked the peach nut and ate the kernel and showed them the American method of cracking nuts under the heel. They were extremely considerate of my ignorance. After dinner we got into the machine and rode to a wine shop where we had some tea. It always takes half the meal for me to make new acquaintances understand that I do not drink wine or coffee. The family asked me to come out and stay with them during our *permission*. We returned to the school about three-thirty. It was a mighty pleasant Sunday.

All the mail is being held somewhere—and we want letters. I get about two letters a week from *marraine*, which fills the gap between those from home.

With love,  
YOUR SON.

*October 2, 1917.*

DEAR FAMILY:

Yesterday's mail brought a good long letter from father and about fifteen Chicago papers. It simply was good to hear the doings in Chicago and suburbs. I imagine there will be a stack of letters come in some of these days. A letter came from my *marraine* saying I must surely stay with her while in Paris.

We have just been out in the field, but wind brought rain up from the south and we returned. When we got back, the mail was in. Oh, golly! Thirteen letters for *me*. It has been a pretty long wait, but they came in a bunch. Letters ranging from September 2 to 12 arrived. My, but it's a pleasure to hear from father. Of course your letters are just as good, but they come natural, as you have been always the official correspondent, but father's letters combine surprise with novelty, and the newspaper clippings are so interesting. They appeal more than the newspapers themselves, because they allow me to follow the interests of my friends through my family. How they do marry off! It will be a different country, a different town, even a changed family when I return. I am not quite sure which is changing the faster—father or Robert. Mother seems to remain the same. Being constantly in my own company keeps me from seeing a change in myself. It is natural that Robert should develop rapidly, but father has changed so greatly that I can hardly keep pace with him. He seems to be entering a new youth from the day he ran up the stairs at 1831 to put out the fire in your room started by my little alcohol engine—I recall him as a silent, serious, weary-with-work father, whose only real friends were in books and in his office. He was nervous and particular, and never would tell me when he was satisfied with what I tried to do—kind, patient, silent, oh, so careful. I could not move him, win him, nor understand him. This was, of course, after my curls were cut. After he had been my Santa Claus and birthday godfather and Easter fairy in granting my every wish, then came the high-school period when I would have given anything to have

really heard his approval, when I no longer feared him nor yet appreciated him. At college I wished to be worthy of his name. There I learned something of men—and, oh, how proud of him I was Junior Week! But from my Christmas vacation there was a great change—the barrier was broken and I began to see in him a future friend and companion, the equal of whom I had not met among all my friends. Of course the change has been mostly in me, and my growing point of view; but, still, father has grown jollier and freer, more witty and talkative, and more intimate with people and nature and animals. I have wondered at the causes: two, anyway, were prosperity and Robert—God bless him and our happy home. To the other, no legend, story, or orator ever succeeded in giving to it its due; that single word more than godly, more than eternal, a title, a prayer, a caress, guardian angel of the mind—*mother!*

Good night, dear family,  
DINSMORE.

DEAR FAMILY:

A few days of poor weather is confining us. There is time to think, and time to do everything you think of—and then time to think.

One of my lines of thought has been how I might make a little money on the side. Our spare hours come in such small classes that it does not permit me to go about seeing the châteaux of this country, or to go to Tours a great deal to sketch, except when it rains; then is not the time to go. Mother mentioned giving my letters to some paper, I believe. I know that a great many people over here are receiving quite a nice little pay for just such letters. I wish I could work it some way, but as I speak of it I feel a queer family pride which would spoil it, I suppose. For some reason or other, there are only certain ways of commercializing one's assets without loss of pride. Is this loss of cosmopolitanism, and an approach to caste? I guess not. I can sketch, but that is not great fun when you haven't interesting subjects and good weather. I can make some post cards and try coloring them, which would not be bad practice withal. Well, I'll be going to Paris soon, and laying in a good supply of good books.

Had a letter from Gop today. His letters are full of foolishness, and most refreshing. He has gotten off all his conditions this summer, and will probably get his degree in mid-year. The fraternity house opens on the seventeenth of September, and Gop thinks there is a promising year ahead. I see from the "*Tech*" there is to be a great increase in the freshman class. My, but I hope they pull through with a strong line. I put a lot of interest into the development of that fraternity, and got a lot out of it. My feeling of ease in the barracks life is improving. I believe adaptation can be made without concession, and get fair results.

Fifty more American pilots from the ground schools in the States arrived yesterday. They have spent their first month in digging trenches and foundations. They arrived in France August 22 via England, and are glad to get here. One of them tells the story of their passage. One of the boats was torpedoed in sight of the Welsh coast. There were seven transports and a convoy of eleven torpedo boat destroyers. They were in the dining room when they felt a heavy jar. All rose to their feet and turned white, a few screamed, and others cried, "Steady." They got to the deck in time to see a destroyer rush to a spot a half mile away, drop a sinking mine, and start up again. Before the destroyer had gone a hundred feet the ocean over the bomb raised up in a mighty spout, which lifted the rear of the destroyer thirty feet on the swell. It was one of the new mines which destroy a submarine within a radius of six hundred feet; meanwhile they had manned the life boats. Inspection proved that the torpedo had struck a glancing blow and had not exploded. It made a rent in the hull of the ship four feet long in a hold containing baled cotton. The ship contained three hundred nurses besides the troops. It is claimed that the submarine was sunk. It seems the mine does not harm the destroyer any more than a rough sea.

Well, so much for today.

YOUR SON.

DEAR BOB:

Your letter arrived about three days ago. I am mighty glad to hear that you are going to Lake Forest to school.

You will make good; you have to make good because your name is Ely—and we are here to prove that the Elys make good. You will be away from home a good deal and I think that will do you a great deal of good. But when you do go home, make the most of it; it is your duty to be with mother and father as much as you can; they need you and it is the one way you can repay them directly. There is another thing, confide in mother and father; just because they are older, don't you think for a moment that they do not understand children. They will not blame you if you tell them things which you think may be wrong, and your conscience will blame you if you do not tell them. And they will show you the best way out of trouble; father can give more of a sermon in three minutes than any minister I ever heard could preach in an hour—and it will not make you feel foolish either. That's at home.

At school you will have no trouble making friends. It is worth your while to make acquaintances with everyone, there is good in all of them. But the best of them are none too good to be your friends. Most of the boys swear and smoke and tell vulgar stories and a few may try liquor; they do it because men do it and they want to be men. Men do it usually because they started when they were boys.

Vulgar stories will keep you from becoming a strong man; once in a while you cannot help listening to them; never remember one, never tell one under any condition, and people will learn to know you as a boy with a clean mind. Liquor will keep you from having a happy home; never touch it. Smoking will keep you from being as strong and healthy as God meant you to be. Everybody who smokes will say it doesn't hurt them, but when they want to make a team they quit smoking. Nobody can keep you from smoking but nobody can stop you either. Many good business men will not hire boys who smoke. Swear if you must, smoke if you want to after you are a man, but for goodness sake, do not do it in order to be a man or because other boys do it. If you cannot be a man without it, you can't be a man with it. And an Ely doesn't do things because other people do them. And you're an Ely.

Amen.

You should be over here and see France. It's the greatest farming and fruit country I ever saw—Wisconsin included. I went for a long walk today and I was eating all the time. I'd come to a vineyard with white grapes—just finished them and along came purple grapes. I'd just finished the purple grapes when I came to a place where walnut trees were on each side of the road and the walnuts were being blown down faster than one could pick 'em up—just as the walnuts were gone, I came to the apples and then the raspberries and blackberries and peaches and chestnuts. I was full by that time. At one place there was a village dug out of the chalk side of the cliff; strange doors and passages and dark rooms as old as America and wells a hundred feet deep; wine presses and wine cellars and stables—all cut from the rocks.

We still have our good scraps. Yesterday there was one with eleven men in it. We knocked over seven beds and one man, whose head was cut, got blood on five of them. It's our only real exercise and we enjoy it.

The other night three Frenchmen stood out in front of the barracks keeping us awake. George Mosely ran out in his nightshirt and tumbled one over, and the other two ran away. Ten minutes later, four men who had been drinking came along and put a man in the rain barrel full of water.

Some of us have been put up in the next class. Soon we have spirals and voyages. Two weeks from now I'll get my license as an air pilot if I have luck. Then come acrobatics.

Write me a letter telling about your school life. Write often. Nothing is better practice in English, composition, spelling, and penmanship, than letter writing; and your being away from home will make you understand how much your lovin' brother wants your letters.

Always an Ely,  
DINS.

October 9, 1917.

DEAR FAMILY:

I decided on the spur of the moment to go to Paris. The equinox has come, and we bid fair to have a week of bad weather. So I borrowed a French uniform from "Stuff" Spencer and am now waiting for the train. I have the privilege of being in the city forty-eight hours. While there I shall go to the Hôtel Cécilia to get many things from my trunk—things that I need here. I shall probably eat and sleep at my *marraine's* home. I just needed a change, and as this is not likely to interfere with flying, I feel all right about it; neither will it detract from my week's *permission* after my brevet. Yesterday I was reprimanded for having United States buttons on my clothes and told to take them off. It is getting cold enough now to use my heavy suit that I got at Field's, so I shall have some gold buttons put on it, and blossom out. No use talking, leather goods are pretty high priced. The stock shoe furnished by the U. S. Army costs \$9.50, the high field boots, such as aviators are wearing, cost \$35.00 to \$40.00; officers' belts cost \$8.00 to \$10.00. You see, we will have to come across. Have not heard concerning my shoes yet, but hope they may have arrived at the club. The "Tech" Club, by the way, has been closed in favor of a University Club, which evolves from it.

Well, I must be off, will probably not write again till my return.

Yours truly,

DINSMORE.

October 15, 1917.

DEAR BOB:

Sometimes we go two or three weeks without enough happening to write about—but yesterday something occurred. They told me to take my altitude test, and put me into the machine. In the altitude test the object is to climb to a height of twenty-six hundred meters (eighty-five hundred feet) and stay there for an hour. Well, I started with a good motor and a joyous heart, for the weather had been bad for six days and I felt like a horse that needs a run. The plane climbed wonderfully. There were quite a few clouds in the sky, but I saw blue spots to go up through as I circled high over the school. In the first fifteen minutes I had climbed fifteen hundred meters, but once up there I found that the holes in the sky had disappeared and there was nothing for it but to go right up through the clouds. The low-hanging cloudlets began to whisk by and the mist gathered on my glasses. Never having played around in the clouds much, I didn't know what was coming. Well, the mist grew thicker and thicker, and looking down I found the ground fading away like pictures on a movie screen when the lights turn on. I began to wonder what I'd do without any ground under me. I soon found out when the ground disappeared entirely. Have you been in a fog so thick that you couldn't see your hand before your face, and you sort of hesitate to step any farther for fear of falling off the edge of something or running into something? Then imagine going through such a fog at eighty miles per hour.

When I had been out of sight of ground for less than a minute something strange seemed to be happening. There was a feeling of unsteadiness, and I thought maybe I was tipping a little. I tried to level up the plane, and found I couldn't tell whether it was tipped to right or left. The controls went flabby, and then the bottom dropped out. You understand I couldn't see twenty feet—but I was falling—faster—faster. The wires and struts of the machine began to whistle and sing and the wind roared by my ears. I began to think very fast. No one has ever fallen far enough to know what that speed is, and lived to tell about it, unless he was in an aeroplane. There was no doubt about it, I was falling—falling like a lost star. I was frightened, in a way, but there was so much excitement—too much to think about to be panic-stricken. It was awful and thrilling. You wonder what happened? Why, I tell it slowly. That is how I wondered what was going to happen. The seconds seemed like minutes. I began to reason about it. Was it all over? Had I made my last mistake when I entered those clouds? Had all my training and education for twenty-three years been leading up to this fall? It seemed unreasonable and unjust. Still, there I was, falling as in a dream. Well, I didn't need my engine, I

was going fast enough without it, so I cut it off, but that's all the good it did. I couldn't see my propeller, and yet I plunged downward. That's right, I must be falling downward. Ah! a bright idea. Downward, therefore toward the earth.

Then I recalled the fact that the lowest clouds were eighteen hundred meters above the earth, and I was still in them. I must come out of them before striking, so I waited. My head felt light; my eyes watered behind the glasses. I remember watching the loose lid on the map box waving and tilting back and forth; then suddenly I became aware of a shadow, a dark spot, a body, and there, 'way off at the end of my wing, was a map of the world coming at me. I headed for it and then slowly let the machine come to its flying position and it was over. I was flying serenely above the earth, with a surprising lack of concern. I had fallen a thousand feet. That was the first one—the thrilling, fearful one.

But I hadn't made my altitude, so I tried again, and fell the same. Many times I tried. Once I saw the sun through the mist, and it was under my wing instead of over it. I was then falling upside down. I do not know the capers that that machine cut up there during the hour and a half of my repeated endeavor to go up through that strata of cloud, but no acrobatic was left unaccomplished, I am sure. Spirals, barrel turns, nose dives, reversements—all unknown to me. I pressed on one side, then on the other. I hung by the belt and pressed forward and backward. Again I would fall into the open. Again I climbed into the clouds, but it was all useless and vain. I could not keep my balance without the world or the sun to go by. Then my motor began to miss, so I decided to go down. Well, if a person has undergone all the dangers and surprises that the air has to offer without being able to see what he is doing, he feels perfectly at home doing anything when he has a clear outlook. I had proved that the machine couldn't hurt itself by falling a thousand feet and as I was still some seven thousand feet high, I decided to experiment, so I did spirals right and left, wing slips, nose dives and tail slips, reversements and stalls, vertical banks and crossed controls—everything, in fact, that I had ever seen done with the machine. They were all simple, without terror, and quite safe. I failed in my altitude, but I learned enough about the handling of that machine to make up for a dozen failures. I'll try my altitude again on a clear day. I am glad I had the experience, for it gave me great confidence. I did three hours of flying yesterday.

The most dangerous thing that happened was one time when I fell in the clouds and the fall seemed longer than usual before the clear air was reached. Suddenly I realized that my glasses were covered with snow, so I took them off and found I had fallen two hundred meters below the clouds while blinded by my glasses. Just to show how nicely balanced a good machine is, I let go of the control about two minutes, while cleaning my glasses, and steered entirely with my feet. My, but flying is a wonderful game. If I come through, I'll give you one royal ride in heaven before I give up aviation.

DINS.

*Château du Bois, La Ferté-Imbault, France,  
October 15 to 27, 1917.*

DEAR MOTHER:

The god of good fortune is still guarding your son, and touching his life with experience and romance. I am a guest at an old French château—but I must start at the beginning. For the past few days I have been too busy to write. After the altitude test, which I completed the following day, I took two *petits voyages*, which were pleasant and uneventful, save for the second when I arrived at the school after dark and made my landing by the light of a bonfire. It was a good landing, and gave me more confidence. The next man after me crashed to the ground so loudly that it was heard a quarter of a mile. The next morning I started upon my first triangle, which is a trip of over two hundred kilometers from Tours to Châteaudun, thence to Pontlevoy, and back again to Tours. My motor gave trouble before starting, but ran well for a time. When I had gone over three-fourths of the way the motor began to miss, and I landed in a field. Four out of the ten spark plugs had gone bad. They had given me only two spark plugs and no wrench. I

borrowed a wrench from a passing motor car, and managed to clean the plugs and start up again, but as no one was there to hold the motor I could not let it warm up and it did not catch well, so I only rose twenty feet. A short turn and side landing was the only thing that kept me from landing in a stone quarry. I taxied back to the field and tried again. By that time the motor was warm and picked up pretty well. I ascended to seven hundred meters, and proceeded confidently on my way, and there is where I "done" made my mistake. For a little time I was lost. Then I found my landmarks and continued. The wind had become quite high, and it took some time for me to come back against it to my course. In fact, it took an hour. Then I continued forty-five degrees into the wind for half an hour. I should have arrived long ago and I was a little worried. The engine began to miss again. The country was spotted with woods and lakes and there were few good landing places. By now I knew I was totally lost and would have to descend, anyway, to find my way. I had no more come to this decision than the engine became hopeless, and I aimed for a field right near a little town under me; but the wind was so strong that I misjudged and overshot my landing and had to turn on my motor again. It caught but poorly, and barely raised me above a hedge of trees and telegraph wires. I had hardly speed to stay up and found myself over a wood, skimming the tree tops by no more than a meter. The slow speed made the controls very difficult, and the currents from the woods tossed me about like a cork on a choppy sea. The wind was blowing thirty miles per hour. For half a mile I staggered over and between the tree tops till I came to a little triangle of field. I made a vertical bank twenty feet from the ground and landed into the wind. It was a good landing, but the trouble was when I touched the ground I was going at thirty miles per hour, and there was a row of trees twenty feet in front of me. I hit between two trees, and when I crawled out, the wings, running gear, and braces and wires were piled around on the ground and trees, and I wasn't even scratched. A crowd gathered to collect souvenirs, and I telegraphed and telephoned to the school to come and pick up the pieces. There was nothing to do but wait, so I went out to a bridge and talked French with a little boy.

Soon a motor car drove up, and out stepped a young French chap. He asked if I was the guy and I says "Yes," and he "lowed" that he was just back from Verdun for his *permission* and asked if I would come out and have supper and stay overnight, so we got in the car and went out to a beautiful château. I met the family and apologized for my clothes, which they said were fine for war times. Then the children came in and played until supper.

They were all charming—no formality or constraint. They all spoke English, more or less, and the dinner was jolly, with difficulties of understanding. The eldest son of the family had lost his life when a bombing plane burned over Verdun last year. That gave them and me a special bond of sympathy. The other son, of about twenty-two, is a sergeant in the First Dragoons. The eldest daughter, of about twenty-eight, mother of all the little children, sat beside me. Her husband is a captain in the First Dragoons. She was very entertaining and spoke English quite well. The other member was the little daughter, about fifteen. Later I learned that M. Duval is a viscount, of the old blood of France.

After dinner we went into the *petit salon*. They entertained me by showing me innumerable photographs. M. Duval is a camera enthusiast, and does all his own developing and printing. He takes these double pictures on plates, and you look at them through a stereoscope. They have traveled very extensively. They have hunted big game and small game in mountain, forest, and plain, and the pictures tell the story like an Elmendorf lecture. Meanwhile, they all contributed interesting remarks in broken English, and so we got better acquainted. Mme. Duval showed me her postcard collection of French châteaux. The Duvals owned more than twenty through Touraine and Normandy, they and their direct relatives by marriage. We all went up the old stairway together and bid each other good night in the upper hall. They asked what I wanted for my breakfast in bed, but I came down bright and early and joined them at a seven o'clock breakfast. We looked at some more pictures and then went rabbit hunting in the drizzling rain. They gave me an American repeating gun. M. Duval assigned us to our positions, not far from the château, and we waited. Three or four men set about to drive the rabbits. Off among the trees I saw the strangest looking rabbit. I pulled up,



about the fire, when it struck me there was something wrong, so I looked again. There were two of the creatures gliding around from one rabbit hole to another. Their color was cream yellow. After a little guessing, I concluded they must be ferrets, so I let them live. Suddenly a man called "Oh-ee," and a rabbit humped past right by my feet. I took a pot shot, but it had me scared and I almost hit my foot, it was so close. Two more went by and didn't mind my shooting at them. They were so close it seemed a pity to shoot them, yet that didn't quite explain my missing. Well, you know what an old hand I am at rabbit shooting. I was just a little out of practice, having fired a shotgun, once when I was twelve years old. The blessing was that no one was there to see. Then I got one at a good distance, and found that it was much easier to hit them at a hundred feet than twenty-five. My average began to go up, and the first fifteen shots I had three rabbits. Then we changed positions, and I found that the son had eleven. I don't think he had fired more than ten shots. At thirty shots I had twelve rabbits, and I felt a little more respectable. It was a pipe after you got used to it. Then we took a walk about the place and went in to lunch. All the food they had was from their own place: meat, wild and tame; fish from the river near by; and chestnuts, mashed like potatoes and baked. These latter are called *les marrons*. There were also sweet cakes, salads, mixed and dressed by M. Duval, and—wonder of wonders—American apple pie! I ate three pieces, and they had it for every meal while I was there. I understand why menus are written in French and old novels rave on French cuisines. Never did I eat such delicious food. Every dish is served separately as a work of art. The service was fine old china, with cracks all through it. The knives, forks, and spoons were gold plated, and the daughter would get up from the table and serve the bread if the maid didn't happen to be in the room. Everyone eats the food as he gets it hot, and one person may be a course behind the others without causing inconvenience.

My word, how I enjoyed every minute of it! It would have been a lark any time, but it was a humming, white-feathered buzzard of a time to one who has been eating in a mess for a month.

Well, that afternoon we hunted some more, and I drove the Renault down to see if the plane was still where it had fallen. That evening the mechanics came with a truck to fetch it, but it was too late, and they had to stay at the château all night. Then their machine broke, and they had to telephone for another. Well, I did not get away until after lunch, so we hunted some more and played tennis. They all came down to the gate to see me off, and truly they made me feel that they were as sorry to see me go as I was to go—and that was "some sorry."

I've tried to finish this letter and send it off, but like all the great things man attempts, it is never finished.

When I left the Château du Bois, they gave me their address in Paris, where they will go in a fortnight; their address at Pau, where they go the last of December, and where I shall probably go at the same time; and the address of their cousins who have a villa a short way from Bordeaux (the place where I shall probably be perfected on the Nieuport). That opens up considerable opportunity to make some friends that are really worth while.

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Gee! when things happen here they happen in bunches. I have enough more to tell to make another letter longer than this. Since I started this letter I have finished the school at Tours, gotten my brevet, and now I am down at Blois seeing a couple of the best châteaux.

I am collecting post cards to beat the band. They will make a wonderful library for my architectural design, as well as a foundation for a little series of travelogues I am going to give the family, and while I think of it I am growing more convinced that when you are young is the time to see the world, especially for the architect. When the war is finished you can figure it will take me a year or more to get home. The education of travel is so far superior to that of school (not "Tech") that there is no comparison.

Love to all,

DINS.

*Paris, November 4, 1917.*

DEAR MOTHER:

You see I am in Paris and am staying at the house of my *marraine*. I wrote you a letter in Châteaudun which was lost through my fault. I wrote father a letter a week ago and carried it till yesterday without mailing. The other letter I mailed, which you should receive, left Tours over two weeks ago. This all goes to prove I am getting careless in my letter writing, for goodness knows there has been so much to write about that I scarcely know where to begin. In the first place, I am a pilot—no longer an *élève* pilot. My brevet is gained and I am recommended for a Nieuport—that is a fighting machine—all of which is as it should be. They overlooked my smash-up, as it was the fault of the motor.

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Having finished at Tours, I went for a day's sight-seeing to Blois. There I saw the grand old historic château of Catherine de' Medici, and the beautiful architectural dream, the château of Chambord. It was a pleasant day, starting at six in the morning and ending with a five-mile walk between twelve and two-thirty last night. Then by a little flower-tossing, I got them to extend my *permission* so as not to include the day at Blois, and left for Paris. I came to my *marraine* at eight-thirty in the evening of Saturday, October 29, and she gave me a room. They have entertained me most generously ever since. I told you of her family in another letter. The daughter, who married a captain, looks for all the world like Marie Antoinette and keeps up an unending flirtation with her husband with refined French coquetry, which is a delight to watch. The two children of the other daughter are jolly little youngsters. We have an hour's romp in the evening, and they have become my shadows. I have been doing Paris, as one might say. I have visited Napoleon's tomb, the Palais de Justice, Sainte Chapelle, the jewel of Gothic architecture, Notre Dame de Paris, Sacred Heart, the Madeleine, and numerous other well-known sights of Paris. I have seen a French vaudeville, a French cinema opera, an afternoon musical of the first order, and four operas: *Madame Butterfly*, *Werther*, *Sapho*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, and a little opéra comique. Never have things come my way stronger to make for a pleasant time. Outside of my clothes, my expenses for the week will not exceed twenty-five dollars, such is the manner of French courtesy.

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You should see your son. Never has an Ely come so near being a dandy. Picture a modish khaki uniform of French cut and the best cloth, with a high collar, gold buttons, gold wings on the collar, a khaki cap with a gold crescent of the Foreign Legion on it, a Sam Brown belt and high leather boots of a well-kept mahogany brown, and over all, a very distinctive and refined Burbury coat and gray gloves. The effect is worth two hundred and fifty francs for the suit, one hundred and sixty-five francs for boots, one hundred and forty francs for overcoat, thirty-five francs for belt; everything is of the best and will serve as my officer's outfit in the U. S. Army with a few minor changes. I felt I had better have the wherewithal to dress well when I was entertained, and I have not regretted it.

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Yesterday I met two Chicago ladies. Some time after Christmas one of them might call at father's office to say that she saw me.

The other day when walking from the flying school to the station in leaving for Paris, Frazier Hale, of Cherry Street, passed me in a machine. He yelled, and I did, and that was all. There will probably be a growing frequency of such meetings as time passes. In war news we hear of ignominious defeat in the Italian sector and good work in the French sector. Your war news is more reliable than ours, no doubt. I shall follow father's advice as to study of the map. The first book on aeronautics arrived last Saturday and seemed satisfactory, though I have not taken time to read more than the introduction. I have plenty of general reading material at my disposal now in the way of history, aeronautical study, and novels by classic and modern writers.

Now, I do not see how anyone could hope to be an architect without seeing the works of this old country. I never knew what design or interior decoration or landscape gardening were before. Every day reveals a new jewel whose impression may leave an idea for future work. Certainly the unconscious assimilation of ideas and proportions will be invaluable. I am not endeavoring to drive myself into following any of these new interests, as I feel it essential to conserve all physical and nervous energy for what will probably be the greatest tax on my life at the Front. My natural tastes seem good enough for the present to lead me to an enjoyment of the best, and I am experiencing the novelty for the first time in my life of living entirely according to my natural taste

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—not that I have ever been cramped, but family environment and educational influence have always dictated my course in life. Now I am swimming entirely alone, and it is pleasant for a new man. This living abroad puts one in tune with the ways of the world.

My love to you all.

Your son,  
DINSMORE ELY.

DEAR FATHER:

My first experience, a bit exciting, came rather early. On my second solo flight when I was half way around and going with the wind at a height of one hundred meters the motor stopped. That is about as bad as can happen at such a height for a student. The minute your motor stops you have to peak at thirty degrees and land into the wind. When my motor stopped, I looked for a landing, and peaked. The landing was a little behind me, so I made a short turn with a steep bank and managed to straighten her out just in time for a bare landing. It is very difficult to turn and bank with a dead motor, and I feel rather elated; and the best of it was that I was not frightened or worried in the least. It all went just as easily and naturally as I believed it would when I took up aviation. The great problem is not to lose speed, you know. In the Nieuport hangars they hang a motto: "Loss of speed is death." Well, the field I had landed in was a bit rough and weedy, but there was a smooth, long stretch adjacent, so I decided to try to get her out myself. You see, the engines we use are Gnome rotary, an archaic type, and very impractical. At the field men hold the machine while the mechanic adjusts the carbureter, and then at a given signal it is released and soars skyward. The charm is that when shut off it won't start again till you prime it, and the mechanic adjusts the carbureter over again for full speed. Well, a Ford was just passing, and they stopped and waited to see what I'd do. I went over and got a can from them to prime the engine with gas, then I cranked the thing and when it started up it darn near ran away with the poor scared man before I could get to the seat, so then I taxied the "girl" up to the far end of the field and wheeled her around. It takes two hundred yards to get to twenty feet height. I had three hundred yards to adjust the carbureter in and clear a row of trees thirty feet high, into the wind, of course. Well, they had explained the thing to us, and I had watched the mechanics, so I gave it to her and didn't look up till I got the engine going. By that time the trees were one hundred yards ahead. She rose a little and I kept her low till she gained speed, and twenty-five yards from the trees I pulled her up and she fairly bounded over the road. I made an "S" curve and just got over the field at the school when the engine died again, and I came down by the bunch with a cylinder burned out.

*November 15, 1917.*

DEAR FATHER:

Where the sky turns from an azure blue to a rosy pink the delicate new moon rests with its points toward the evening star. From these two jewels of heaven, the sunset sky grades away to a misty, mysterious horizon. The gray distance is offset with a delicate lacework of the autumn-stripped hedge of poplars with their slim, graceful lattice work, reaching to points in the pink, and where the dark earth and the white road come to the foreground, two great apple trees with their gnarled autumn boughs frame the scene of simple beauty as it fades to night. As I entered the kitchen of a little old farm house, which people who eat there choose to call the "Aviator," cheery voices and appetizing odors greeted me in preparation for the evening meal. The clean tile floor, the whitewashed walls, the low-hung, richly stained rafters, and the old walnut chest by the brick fireplace all made me think of Aunt Maggie's old kitchen where the pies and the cookies were kept, and that makes me think of other fireplaces and other rafters—and the folks at home.

So I just sit down to the oilcloth-covered table and try to tell them what a restless, twentieth-century lad thinks of the environment of his parents' childhood.

DINSMORE.

DEAR FAMILY:

Today started out very foggy, because there was no wind. We stood in the field till one o'clock waiting for the air to clear. I got a machine by four. The next hour contained enough excitement to do for the day. The planes are like mad little Indian ponies turned loose in the field—or, better still, like Pegasus bound into the air with a spirit that must be tamed by steady nerves and gentle hand. It is hard to describe just the feeling which possesses one. We are taught the principles and the movements that control the machine and then we are sent alone into the air to find an understanding of them. Perhaps you are turning a corner at an angle of forty-five degrees on the bank. Suddenly you feel something is wrong. The wind whistles louder than usual. Is it because you are pointing nose down, or are you sliding out over the rim of the curve, or down into the center of it? It is one of the three, and to correct the wrong one is to make worse the other two, yet the correction must be made. Now it is too late to figure it out, so you just correct it without thinking, and wonder which fault it was. In an animal we call it instinct, but there is an instant there which, when it passes, leaves a vacuum in the nervous system. The machine climbs like a tiger, and as we are not yet permitted to cut down the gas, it takes much strength to hold its nose down. I made fifteen five-minute rides, and now I'm pleasantly tired and relaxed.

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I had ten rides in the eighteen-meter Nieuport and am getting the run of it. It is one of the most difficult machines to drive. I had bad luck in motors or would have finished today. My motor stopped twice when I was twenty-five meters from the ground, but I landed without mishap. With these machines the wing area is so small you head almost straight for the ground and just straighten out in time to land. You make a tour of five or six miles and mount a thousand feet into the air in five minutes—but you will be tired of reading this sort of thing very soon. The thing to do is to go to some aviation field and see it all done.

One of father's letters arrived with a lot of clippings in it. Those clippings are very interesting. I enjoy them much more than the papers. The *Saturday Evening Post* is read from cover to cover and passed about till the pages are thin, so it would fill a big demand. Another book on aviation came. I have not yet had time to finish the first one. As they go into the technical end of things rather deeply, I can only study a small amount at a time. Most of my reading lately has been history.

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DINS.

*Bourges, November 7, 1917.*

DEAR FAMILY:

I am at Bourges on my way to Avord after my happy *permission* in Paris. As there were no train connections I had to stay here over night. Well, last Sunday we went to an American church, with an all-American service. It seemed rather pleasant. In the afternoon we went to the Opéra Comique to see *Werther* and *Cavalleria Rusticana*. They were both splendid and included some of the best stars. Oh, how I love the opera!

... I spent Monday afternoon in roaming about Paris. I went to the Louvre and Gardens of the Tuileries and Luxembourg, and to several of the less important churches. I saw St. James's church from the tower of which the bells were rung as a signal on the night of St. Bartholomew. I believe I know Paris and its sights better now than Chicago, not that I have seen everything—one could never do that—but just the general layout. I never will get tired raving about the architecture.

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My train leaves soon.

With love,  
YOUR SON.

*November 10, 1917.*

DEAR FATHER:

Yours of October 13 received. The letters of my family are of more interest and intimacy than ever before. You say I should be glad you are not in the machine with me to give me advice, but I say unto you, "You are the one to be glad." If you are worried by

the thought of what might happen if a steering buckle in an automobile should break, how would you feel to be hanging on wires and compressed air? Once in the air it is a fool's pastime to think of what might happen. The god of luck is the aviator's saint. Man pits his resource against the invisible, and never for an instant doubts his ability. Those who doubt are probably those who do not come back. They are much in need of Nieuport pilots, and rushing us through as fast as weather permits.

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Cannot write tonight as everybody is telling flying stories.  
Good night,  
YOUR SON.

*November 12, 1917.*

DEAR BOB:

Your letter came yesterday, and as I am in a great writing mood tonight I shall answer it. First, to tell you what we are doing. We are now back at the school of Avord. Here we learn to fly the Nieuport. A year ago that was the fastest plane at the Front and they still use them as fighting planes. First we ride in double command "twenty-eight's." (Twenty-eight means twenty-eight meters square of wing surface.) Then we do "twenty-three" double command and then are cut loose on them. Lastly, we finish with twenty rides solo in an "eighteen." I finish the "twenty-eight" class tomorrow and will be through at this school in ten days. The eighteen-meter machines land at ninety miles an hour. They are wonderful little things and will do anything in the air. We go to work at six in the morning, and return at six in the evening, but the hardest work is waiting when there is too much wind to fly. We build a fire and sit about telling stories and making toast. When we cannot get bread we just tell stories. When it rains we go in the tent and read. I am reading a history of France. It is more fun to read history than to study it, and I think you know more when you get through. Of course I am surrounded by all the old castles and battle grounds and graves of the warriors of seven centuries. That makes a difference.

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There was a bad accident the week before I got here. A two-passenger plane struck a solo plane in the air. It was a head-on collision, and all three aviators were killed. That is a very rare accident, though.

I see America is preparing for five years of war. You may get over yet. Write me whenever you can. You do not know how much your letters help to buck up a lonely brother sometimes.

Your ever loving brother,  
DINS.

*November 13, 1917.*

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DEAR MOTHER:

Today was a wonderful, clear, crisp November day, and we breathed our fill of it. I had seven rides in a twenty-eight meter and one in a twenty-three meter Nieuport. In life the things we look forward to usually fall below our expectations, but not so in aviation. In aviation, every experience so totally eclipses all expectations that you realize you were totally incapable of imagination in that field. We change planes five times in progressing from Penguin to Spad. Each change is as great an advance and difference as stepping from a box car to a locomobile limousine with Westinghouse shock absorbers.

The Nieuport is the plane we are using now, with a man to give the scale. It has a supporting area of twenty-three square meters. It is the fighting plane used at the Front seven or eight months ago.

DINSMORE.

*November 15, 1917.*

DEAR MOTHER:

Things are going quite well. Day before yesterday I left the twenty-eight meter Nieuport class and today finished the twenty-three meter class and was advanced. Tomorrow I shall finish solo

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work on the twenty-three's and take up eighteen's. The monitors seem to think my work fairly good. The little eighteen-meter Nieuports are great. They are small and racy, with a wing spread of twenty-five feet. They have fine speed and land at eighty-five miles an hour. You land by cutting off the power and pointing the nose for the ground. By pulling the tail down she slows up and finally drops a yard to the ground. It is a very precise sport.

You would like it fine above the clouds, Mother. It is most beautiful and dazzling as the sun's rays bounce along on the snowy billows, and you can swoop down and skim the crest of the cloud waves till the frost turns the wires to silver and your cheeks sting red in the mist.

DINSMORE.

*Ecole d'Aviation, Pau, November 22, 1917.*

DEAR FATHER:

This is the most pleasantly situated and best regulated camp I have been in yet. Pau itself is on a little plateau overlooking a valley with a river and surrounded by the foothills of the Pyrenees. On the sky line to the south and west of the beautiful snow-capped peaks, 4,000 feet high.

In this environment we are to attain proficiency in the handling of the war plane. The trip down from Avord was a tedious one, with a pleasant break of day at Toulouse. I came down with two Frenchmen who were excellent company. We spent two nights on the train. All the sleeping cars are used at the Front to carry wounded, so we slept sitting up. Sleeping cars are not so common in Europe, I guess. When I woke up yesterday morning the character of the country had changed from the rolling valleys of Touraine to the more rocky and broken country of Toulouse. The buildings were brick instead of stone, and one could see the round arch and barrel vault of Romanesque influence, combined with the low broken roofs of Spanish architecture. Here and there appeared the beautiful pines which suggested the blue of the Mediterranean and cliff villages, as pictured in paintings of Naples and southern Italy. Arriving in Toulouse about nine in the morning, we washed and had breakfast at a very pleasant hotel restaurant. It had the atmosphere of a good Paris restaurant, but the waitresses were of the brunette southern type, with sparkling eyes and impetuous activity. We liked it so well that we had all three meals there. At lunch, the table next to us was occupied by a good-looking gentleman with a dark moustache, who evidently was suing the favor of the proprietress' very attractive daughter, therefore the waitress who attended him was gifted with ability and liberty. She caught the spirit of her position, and ushered in each new delicacy with a pomp and grimace, playing the part of bearer of the golden platter and king's jester with a flippant coquetry and grace which was more entertaining than any show I've seen in France.

We spent the day in seeing the town. It is rich in monuments of history and art. The cathedral of St. Etienne is a monument of brick which opened to me a whole new field of possibility in the use of that material. It combines the mass of Romanesque with the Gothic form of an early vitality. The great basilica of St. Sernin is truly Romanesque and a perfect example of the Provincial style which introduced the Romanesque influence into France. We saw the paintings in the Hôtel de Ville, done by masters of the city of Toulouse, who were of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. These works were distinctly of the most modern school, and they appeal to me more than anything I ever have seen. Wonderful composition and lighting effect, combined with a freshness of color and naturalness which shows what really can be done with paint.

The large museum was in a great old monastery, built of hand-made bricks by the monks of St. Augustine in the ninth century. It is still beautifully complete, with cloistered court and brick-vaulted chapel. Past peoples live in monuments they leave. Monuments express the life and art and religion of a people. To build such monuments is the work of an architect. This is the greatest thing that ever happened to me. It shows me the purpose and benefit of education; for the rest of my life what I read will be absorbed with so much more interest and insight and profit. Maybe the course of technology is narrow and technical, but I find that never did I want to study and learn by reading as at present. It has waked me to the

fact that I have tastes and the right to follow them as I please. And I can follow them in my many spare hours without detracting from my service in the Cause.

Your letter containing clippings and cartoons was very entertaining. I believe cartoons serve the purpose of keeping alive the trend of public thought without being filled up with unreliable censored facts and rumors.

Love to you all.

Your son,  
DINSMORE.

*November 29, 1917.*

DEAR FAMILY:

Today was Thanksgiving, and we all had the very pleasant surprise of a day of *repos* given us by the captain that we might be present at a banquet given us by the American colony at Pau. It was held at one of the good hotels and had all the proper characteristics of a regular Thanksgiving dinner. There were forty-two of us there. After the meal we had some songs from local talent, which were of no mean variety, and then we went to a moving picture show which was rather a failure except as a place to digest an excellent and more than hearty meal.

My, but the machines we have now are a joy to run. They climb, they turn, they dive, and recover as you think. You have but to wish in the third dimension and you are there. It is beyond description. You sit comfortably behind a little windshield without glasses and watch the country far below. You forget the motor and space, and speed until suddenly something of interest causes you to lean out and you are struck in the face by a gust of wind which bends your head back and pumps your breath back into your lungs. Then you know what speed means. Soon your motor begins to miss, and you become worried and look for a place to land. You find the fields not more than one hundred feet square. You glance at the altimeter and find that you have unconsciously climbed to an altitude where the air is light, and your motor pants, so you make a readjustment, glance back at the school fifteen miles behind, which you left eight minutes ago, and go on your way.

Tomorrow I do spirals in fifteen-meter machines, and then go to *vol de group*. There we learn to fly in group formation and keep relative positions. They play "follow the leader" and "stump" in that class—some class! Then come acrobatics.

DINS.

DEAR FAMILY:

This is a country of beautiful views, wonderful colorings of distant hills and the snow-capped mountains as changeable as the sea. We fly among the foothills and look down upon the beautiful estates and castle ruins nestling among them. There has been little sun, but the fact that one catches but passing glimpses of the mountains among the clouds does not detract from their charm, and the moisture in the air makes the coloring richer. I am in no hurry to leave.

Erich Fowler, one who has been with us from the beginning, and one of our best liked and most congenial fellow-sportsmen, was the first among our crowd to be killed. He fell five hundred meters with full motor and did not regain consciousness. It is believed he fainted in the air, as the controls were found intact and no parts of the machine missing. He was buried today at Pau. When the fellows find no way to express their feelings it is taken laconically, and the subject has been dropped already. No one is unnerved or frightened by the experience. Fortunately the ego is strong enough in every man to make him feel the fault would not have been his in such a case, and he believes in his own good fortune enough to be confident nothing will happen to his machine.

This is the school where the poor aviators are weeded out. The men who have dissipated relentlessly have lost their nerve and dropped out. The poorer drivers have voluntarily gone to bombing planes. The physically unfit have dropped off in the hospitals, and here those who have not the head to fly come to grief. Four out of five of the Russians who enter this school leave in a hearse. Some national characteristic makes it almost impossible for them to complete the course.

Out of twenty-five machines broken in a fall, one man is killed. Out of ten men killed, nine deaths are caused by inefficiency on the part of the pilot. They say I have more than the ordinary allotment of requirements of a good pilot. My assets are perfect health and a clear mind to offset the chance of misfortune which may stand against me. Knowing me, realize that all the statements I have made are conservative.

In a letter I received from Viscountess Duval the other day she said: "As you are interested in art, it will be a pleasure to show you through our galleries when you come to Paris. They are as fine as any in the city." Her husband is evidently a writer of some distinction. They are coming to Pau and I hope will arrive before I leave.

I shall be quite busy for the next week and not have a great deal of time to write. No letters have reached me from home for over three weeks.

Yours with love and wishes for a very Merry Christmas.

Your son,

DINSMORE.

Not till the last line did I realize that Christmas was so near. Naturally, the war Christmas will be more conservative than ever, but I hope that real festivities will continue. America is far enough from the Front to keep the sound of battle from breaking the rhythm of the dance. I should like to be back there for three or four days of the Christmas vacation, with a fair round of dancing and turkey and calling on old friends. I shall make every effort to spend Christmas at my *marraine's*.

My present to mother is a silver frame containing a picture of her son in war array of leathers and furs, helmet and goggles, standing by the propeller of France's fastest war plane. To father I give my *croix de guerre* representing the first Boche I brought down, and to Bob goes a penholder shaped like a propeller and made from a splinter of the propeller of my first Boche plane—all imaginary gifts, but true.

Your son,

DINSMORE.

*December 1, 1917.*

DEAR BOB:

Your letter written November 10 came yesterday with a lot of other letters and about five packages. Gee! it was just like Christmas. We all sat about the stove and ate nuts and dates, figs and candy, till our stomachs ached. You can't appreciate what wonderful and necessary things figs and prunes are till you go without sweet things by the month. Take a prune, for instance. If I could have a candied prune for every mile I walked, I would use up a pair of shoes every week. Myrtle sent me three cans of salted nuts; and a girl in Boston sent me a surprise package.

Well, Bob, I am a real pilot now. I can play "stump the leader" with anybody. Turning loops and somersaults and corkscrew turns are nothing any more. The hardest things to do are the "roundoversments," "barrel roll" and "vertical bank."

Here they give us a machine and we go up and do what we like for two hours. One day I went 'way up over the mountain peaks and circled close around the highest one; then I went down in the valleys and played chicken hawk over the villages and followed the railroad train down the valley. You should see the cows and sheep run when my shadow crossed their fields. You can head right for the mountainside and then whirl around and skim along with the fir trees passing close by—twice as fast as an express train.

Inside the machine the seat is comfortable and you huddle down behind the windshield as comfortable as can be. The wind roars by so loudly that it drowns out the noise of the motor. Before long your ears are accustomed to the sound and you feel as if you were slipping along as silently as a fish.

Another day we went sixty-five miles to Biarritz. It is a bathing resort on the ocean. I went down over the ocean and circled around the lighthouse on the way back and then sped down the beach just over the water line. I didn't see any submarines, but maybe they saw me first and beat it. I got back to the school just before dark and didn't have gasoline enough left to go five miles.



They gave it to me for being gone so long, but it was a great trip. The next day I tried for an altitude and made next to the highest in this school—6,500 meters or 21,320 feet. It wasn't much joy. I froze three finger tips and frosted my lungs I think, and had chills and headache till supper time. For an hour I pounded my hands together while steering with my knees. There were six strata of clouds. The last was above me and at the top. I didn't see the ground for an hour and a half. When you realize that they do their fighting between five and six thousand feet, you see what endurance it will take. They are right to make the test high for aviators.

The most fortunate of us are being sent to Cazaux on the coast near Bordeaux. There they have all kinds of target practice from an aeroplane. You shoot at floats in a lake by diving at them, and at sausages dragged through the air by another plane. Well, we have done some of that here. We went up and dropped a parachute and then pretended it was a German plane and dived at it back and forth. Believe me, it was no easy matter to aim a gun into that machine while you are diving down at a speed of 250 miles an hour. Then we go in pairs for team work and dive at it turn about.

The last few days we have been having a great time. We divided into two groups and called one the French and the other the Boche, and we go out and hunt each other up and down the valley. We have sham combats and keep our squadron formation during the maneuvers. We do this for ten days before going to Cazaux. I am unusually lucky to get so much of this training, and am pleased about it, though I'm afraid I'll not be in Paris for Christmas. (I hope you will write and tell me about your dance and your Christmas holidays, and I'll tell you what I do Christmas.) As for this war, I'm not saying a word, but I wouldn't be surprised if you and your children would get a chance to fight in it. There have been hundred-year wars before now, and our modern civilization is not so small that it can't reproduce what has been done before. But if every American has to return to the United States and start producing, raising, and training soldiers for the next fifty years to beat them, we'll thrash them, by God, if it leaves America a desert and Germany a hole in the ground.

The shoes the family sent me are a perfect fit and just what I wanted, and the socks were a surprise. As for that surprise box, I will continue to enjoy that for many a day. I ate a little and passed around a little each day.

Good night, Bob.

Don't lose any sleep over studies.

Your loving brother,

DINS.

Merry Christmas—Happy New Year.

*December 6, 1917.*

DEAR FAMILY:

The past few days have been wonderful in weather and accomplishments. I have been seeing southern France at the rate of a hundred miles an hour—five hours a day. Yesterday morning I flew to Notre Dame de Lourdes. It is a place to which thousands pilgrimage each year to be healed by the flow of waters there. It is a beautiful little village at the base of the mountains, and is hidden in the shadow of steep cliffs. From there I wandered among the foothills and circled over the little mountain hamlets. In the afternoon I headed straight for Pic du Midi. It is the second highest mountain in this vicinity. In three-quarters of an hour I was a thousand meters above it. I swooped down around it and took pictures, with it in the foreground. Then I came back by way of another canyon, and arrived at the school at dusk. After a lot of foolish monkey business, I spent the last hour running at a height of two hundred feet with my motor throttled 'way down. Sitting low in my seat, hardly touching the controls, skimming the tree tops in the quiet hazy evening air, it made me think of how father used to love to see the old White throttle down to two miles an hour, the difference being that I had throttled down to ninety.

This morning four of us went down to Biarritz and out over the ocean. I went down and circled around the lighthouse. All these things are forbidden by the school, but as men are daily risking their lives in gaining proficiency in flight, it is difficult to waive a

*Hôtel de l'Univers, Tours, December 8, 1917.*

DEAR FAMILY:

I am too tired tonight to write a real letter, but all the stuff arrived, and it was great. The shoes and surprise package with the Christmas card, and letters from October 20 to November 10 arrived. If you knew how we gloat over those prunes and dates and figs and candies and nuts, you would—send some more. Thank you much.

I am now a real flyer in every sense of the word, and am working five hours every day. I'll tell you all about it soon.

YOUR SON.

*Pau, France, Saturday, December 15, 1917.*

DEAR FAMILY:

We are having sham battles every day. They thought a few of us good enough to hold over for extra training ten days and send us to a special shooting school as Cazaux. This increases our efficiency some fifty per cent before going to the Front and gives us that much more chance. I have had more training than the average, due to more luck and interest. Today I shot a machine gun at a pointed aeroplane. Out of eighty shots, of which three bullets failed to leave the gun, sixty-seven hit the square target; of these sixty-seven, twenty-seven struck the plane and the man in it. It is the best score I have seen, and encourages me. This shooting is very vital.

We leave here in about two days, and remain at Cazaux about ten. Then we go to Paris and wait for our call to the Front. I'll be in Bordeaux Christmas, and in Paris New Years. At the Front we go into different escadrilles, French, and spend the first month as apprentices before going to fight the Boche. We attend lectures and fly all the time here and sleep twelve hours a day. It is a full-sized job, and enough for me. It may be a beautiful life in training, but I am beginning to realize that the real service will take all that war requires of any man. In fact, it will be all that I anticipated before entering the work. There has been a period in which I thought it rather an easy branch of the service. But I am much better fitted for it than the average man doing it. I was a little afraid I would be too conservative; not devilish enough—but I guess my reason does not curb my abandon. There is not much to be told just now, as we follow a pretty steady routine from 6 A.M. to 9:30 P.M. The weather has been beautiful; frost on the trees and mist on the mountains, lighted by a rose-colored winter's sun in beauty unsurpassed. I sketch a little and read a little and struggle to keep up my correspondence. Family letters are slow in coming, but have been delayed or lost, no doubt.

Good night, and love to all from

DINSMORE.

*Ecole de Tir, Cazaux, December 18, 1917.*

DEAR FAMILY MINE:

Here I am back near Bordeaux where I started on my tour of France. We came to this school understanding that we were to be abused by the severest military discipline, but we are delighted to find that they continue to spoil us. We have as pleasant barracks as are to be had in France. We are permitted to eat in the *sous-officers'* mess—a very special mark of favor, which is really a break of military discipline—and to cap it all, they are giving the whole camp *repos* to go to Paris for Christmas and for New Years. That is pretty nice. You know we are really only corporals—that is to say, privates of no rank—yet they really treat us like commissioned officers.

My affection for the French people continues to grow. They are not more gallant in action than the American is at heart, and they are less gallant at heart, but the French politeness which irritates some people seems to me to express a desire to be inoffensive to

one's fellows.

Our interpreter and lecturer speaks English very well, and is an excellent fellow. He has served in the Arabian division of the French Army, and in the French lines also. He says the Arabians are volunteer veterans of the French Army and make some of their best fighters. They cannot stand bombardment and so are used only for attacks. They go over the top with bayonets, swords, revolvers, cutlasses, and war cries. They throw the weapons away in the order mentioned, as they close with the enemy. At the finish, they are using only cutlasses, and they take no prisoners. They fight like devils, and ask no quarter. We see many of them around the aviation school. They have fine, sensitive features, and those novel, keen but dreamy eyes of the Orient. Their carriage is proud, and their smile disarming.

The Senegalese are another interesting factor in the French fighting forces. They, too, are volunteers, and of the finest aggressive troops used only in attacks. Great, stalwart blacks from Africa, with intelligent faces and a rather indolent air, which impresses one as masking a latent virility. They little suggest the man-eating head-hunters that they are. They are of many tribes, and are distinguished by a tribal mark in the form of great scars, which have mutilated their features since childhood. One will have great symmetrical slashes cutting each cheek diagonally; another a large cross upon his forehead; another a ring of little pie cuts enclosing his eyes, nose, and mouth, and anyone able to remember their strange name can recognize the tribe by the mark.

They tell some terrible stories of these men. It is rumored that at this camp two of them went wild under the influence of liquor and killed and ate two members of an enemy tribe. In an attack these men are worse than the Arabs and outbutcher the Huns. The Germans fear them like death. In the advance, when they come upon a German who may be playing 'possum, they drive the bayonet in an inch or so to test him out and sink it to the hilt if he moves. They charge with their teeth showing, and do their nicest work with a weapon which is a cross between a butcher's cleaver and a corn knife. They are called "trench cleaners" and return with strings of human ears and heads, which after boiling make good skull trophies. Yet these vicious Africans make reliable soldiers, and one sees them standing guard night and day in prison camps and aviation schools.

There is a great Russian camp near here in which thousands of Russians are held in detention. There was a mutiny of Russian troops in the French lines and they sent them down here. They will not fight or work, but only wander about the landscape eating good food. Something will, no doubt, be done with them as soon as it is possible to focus on the Russian question, but this is cause enough for the French to hate the Russians. A man in Russian uniform is mobbed in the streets of Paris now. Officers there are forced to go about in civilian clothes. It is very hard on some of the conscientious aviators who are anxious to fight. For a time they were quite broken-hearted and disconsolate. But now it has been arranged that Russian escadrilles will be formed as part of the French service. One of these Russians, with whom I've struck quite a friendship, is a great, six-foot-two fellow, with a splendid face and a genial nature. He has served three years in the Russian cavalry, and was describing their life. They travel in groups of six for reconnaissance work and are gone from their companies days at a time. One will forage the meat, another the bread, another the drink, and so on. Their experiences are fascinating, but too long to tell here. He spoke highly of the valor of the Cossacks. He said he had seen a Cossack attack an entire company of German infantry single-handed. (As he told it, a light came in his eyes and he lowered his head, making gestures with his big hands. His name is Redsiffsky.) The Cossack drew up in front of the Germans, looked on one side and then the other, drew his long saber and raising in his saddle charged into the heart of them. His great frame swayed and his saber cut circles of blue light about his horse's head as he slashed down man after man. A German's arm would be severed as it raised to strike; a German's head would roll down its owner's back; a German's body would open from neck to crotch. Still the Cossack on rearing horse slashed through and the Germans crowded in. Then the Cossack's mount went down, stabbed from beneath, and with a final slash, the Russian threw his saber and drew his poniard from his belt. He ripped and stabbed at the Germans as they closed in for the final sacrifice. His life was

marked by seconds then, but every second paid till a telling musket in full swing descended on his skull. When the Germans withdrew, nine of their number stayed behind and seven left with aid. Of the Russian, nothing was to be found. The German revenge had been complete, but a Cossack *had died*.

YOUR SON.

*December 19, 1917.*

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DEAR UNCLE:

Please consider this a Christmas letter. It will not arrive on Christmas, it isn't even written on Christmas, but the Christmas spirit is responsible for its writing, and wishes for a "Merry Christmas" and "Happy New Year" go with it to you, Aunt Virgie, and all my Cleveland friends.

There are a whole bunch of us sitting at the same table writing home. We have just discovered that we are to have *permission* to Paris for Christmas. The result is that it has required three-quarters of an hour for me to write this much. Between the silences are bursts of conversation connected by laughter.

We have now arrived at the last stage of aerial training in France. It is a school of special merits, and the best of its kind. Not only that, but it is also a very pleasant place to live. The barracks are situated in orderly rows in a wood of Norway pine bordering a large lake. From the shores long piers and rows of low hangars painted gray and white run out into the water, forming harbors. In the little harbors, speed boats with khaki awnings and machine guns on prow and stern lie anchored in flotillas, and hydroaeroplanes are drawn up in rows on the docks. Flags float, and sailors and soldiers in the uniforms of five nations move about in military manner. From one broad pier containing a row of shooting pavilions, the rattle of musketry and light artillery keeps the air tense. The sky line is dotted with man-flown water birds going and coming, and off in the distance the chase machines at practice look like dragon flies as they swoop and whirl about the drifting balloon which is their target. Though it has the sound and aspect of war, there is the spirit of a carnival present.

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Our work consists of lectures, target practice, and air training. In the lectures we learn the science of gun construction and that of marksmanship in aviation. It is a science, too. Considering that the target and shooter are both moving at the greatest speed of man, allowance must be made instantaneously without instruments for the speed of each plane. The angle of their flight is in three dimensions, and in addition there is the speed of the bullet to be considered. Of course, each plane type of the enemy has its own speed, which varies according to whether it is climbing or diving. Practice must make all this calculation second nature. The calculation made, we are then ready to try our ability in directing the course of an aeroplane in carrying out the calculation. The target practice consists of shooting clay pigeons with shotgun and rifle, shooting carbines at fixed and floating targets and shooting floating targets from the observer's seat of an aeroplane. The third branch is shooting from a chase monoplane; we shoot at balloons and sausages towed by other machines, and dive at marks in the water and on the ground. It is great sport.

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In twenty days we leave here. We hope to be at the Front.

I must eat now. Love to all.

Yours ever,

DINS.

*December 19, 1917.*

MY DEAR MRS. HALBERT:

After all, it is the surprises that add the most spice, and it was certainly a pleasant surprise to receive your knit helmet. As a matter of fact, no gift could have been more aptly chosen. The only helmet I had was knit by a girl friend whose enthusiasm was greater than her skill; it no doubt represented much painstaking, but romance will not keep the head warm nor the ravelings out of one's eyes when aloft, and I had wished hard and oft for a helmet of just the type you sent; others had them. Thank you so much for it, it fits perfectly.

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You probably know something of how my time has been spent. I am still in the LaFayette Flying Corps of the French Foreign Legion. We have been through four French schools of aviation and are now as good pilots as can be made without experience at the Front. We are now working in machines the same as are used at the Front, and engage daily in target practice and sharpshooting as well as the theory of gunmanship. We have been trained for pilots in the class machines, that is, fighting monoplane biplanes. They travel at a speed of from ninety to one hundred and fifty miles an hour; in a dive they will go two hundred and fifty or so. Aerial acrobatics in these machines are like a morning swim, and they have the appearance of a clipped-wing dragon fly. The life is wonderful and healthy and full of thrills. Every flight brings a new experience. We have flown circles around the highest peaks of the Pyrenees and swooped over the bathers at Biarritz. We have played hide-and-seek in the clouds and fought sham battles above them. One day I went to an altitude of 21,500 feet and froze three finger tips; I came down out of the sunshine through a snow storm and landed in the rain after sunset. Such changes were never possible before this age. They are a great strain on the system, and it is resisting that strain which is an aviator's real work. The rest is play and sport.

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I would like to write more but must go to bed. Thank you again for your thoughtfulness. My best wishes for a happy, prosperous New Year to the Halbert family.

As ever, sincerely,  
DINSMORE.

*December 28, 1917.*

DEAR FAMILY:

I awake to the melody of the same reveille which brings ten million soldiers to action over the world each morning; the same bugle which sounds the end of the night's bombardment, and the beginning of the day's carnage on battle fronts from the North Sea to the Mediterranean. I yawn, stretch, lie in ten or fifteen minutes of delicious indecision and then dress sitting on the edge of my cot. My underwear in the daytime is my night clothes; socks are changed almost every week, dried of the dampness of the day by the warmth of the night in bed; my sweater and shirt also work twenty-four hours a day. The muffler mother knitted for my neck is a fine pillow; my great sheepskin coat—my greatest comfort and the envy of officers—plays the comforter; all these are the constant guardians of the warmth of my body. It is they, and not parade dress that should be allowed to wear war's honors if they are worn for it is they who have served. Then I rush out and wash hands and face dutifully in cold water. Then I hasten to my breakfast—three slices of bread and butter. The bread is free, but the butter costs five cents, twenty-five centimes in French money, and is eaten while walking to the field. During the morning I fly perhaps an hour and a half. I return to lunch and an hour's repose. Another hour or so of flying and a lecture occupy the afternoon. On the way home at four o'clock we stop in at a little shanty where three amiable and good-looking country girls serve us with oysters and jam and chocolate. The oysters are better than blue points, and cost ten cents a dozen. We talk and sing and walk home. At six I have dinner and after dinner write letters till weary. Then I go to bed.

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The war's toll has been 3,000,000 lives or so. A fourth of the ships are sunk. The great nations will be bankrupted. Will we dare speak of God? Will architecture be a good profession after the war? What is one man in all this? I go to bed each night trying to get a perspective of life and the world and my place.

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DINSMORE ELY.

*December 28, 1917.*

DEAR FAMILY:

My Christmas was spent in Paris with my *marraine*. There was snow on the ground. On Christmas Eve I went to the great Paris Grand Opera House. It is a monument to the artistic appreciation of the French public, and as a piece of architecture it is a

masterpiece. As you ascend its grand stairway and pass through the foyer and grand balconies into the gorgeous theater, you feel the power of the master designers and builders and artists who contributed to its conception. The opera was *Faust*. The French singers are no better musically but they are splendid actors, which is not the case in American opera. The love scene in *Faust* was done with the taste of Sothorn's and Marlowe's *Romeo and Juliet*. The *Faust* ballet was splendid. Oh, how I enjoyed that evening. On Christmas day I went twice to see David Reed, whom I liked so well in the Ambulance Unit, and who has been sick in the hospital with grip and a broken arm. He is one of those the war cannot soil.

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My *marraine's* grandchildren gave me a big box of candied fruit, which I found in my shoes on Christmas morning. I gave the little girl a doll, dressed in "Old Glory," and the boy an American pocket flashlight. The train left at eight on Christmas evening. My four comrades and I met in our reserved compartment and had a very pleasant journey back to Cazaux, arriving at ten-thirty in the morning. We all had a good time telling of our merry Christmas. The cakes and chocolate which my *marraine* gave me helped to fill five empty stomachs at five in the morning.

My worst experience in the air was awaiting me. We flew in the afternoon. I took a machine and a parachute and climbed to 1,800 meters. We were only supposed to climb to 1,400, but I disobeyed and it probably saved my life. I threw out the parachute and took a couple of turns at it. After diving at the thing and mounting again, I started into a "roundversment" with my eyes on the parachute. Unconsciously, I went into a loop and stopped in the upside-down position, where I hung by my belt. I cut the motor, and grabbed a strut to hold myself in my seat. The machine fell in its upside-down position till it gained terrific speed, then it slowly turned over into a nose dive, and I came out in a tight spiral which slowly widened into a circle at *ligne de vol*, but the controls were almost useless, and it took all my strength to keep from diving into the ground. You know what skidding is, so you can imagine what loss of control in an automobile going at high speed would be, but you cannot imagine what loss of control of an aeroplane is any more than a lumberjack can imagine a million dollars.

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When a machine is upside down, the stress comes on the wrong side of the wings and is apt to spring them. My plane had fallen a thousand meters, and the wings had been thrown out of adjustment so that the controls were barely able to correct the change. I did not regain control of any sort until I was 400 meters from the ground, and then I could do nothing but spiral to the left. In that fall, when I found I could not control the machine, I believed it was my last flight. It was the first time I ever had been conscious of looking death squarely in the face. After the first hundred meters of fall, I was perfectly aware of the danger. I was wholly possessed in turn by doubt, fear, resignation (it was just there that I was almost fool enough to give up), anger (that I should think of such a thing), and, finally realization that only cool thinking would bring me out alive—and it did! From 400 meters I spiraled down with barely enough motor to keep me from falling, in order that the strain on the control would be minimum. The old brain was working clearly then, for I made a fine adjustment of the throttle and gasoline—just enough to counteract the resistance of controls, crossed in order to counteract the bent wings, and just enough to let the plane sink fast enough so that it would hit the ground into the wind in the next turn of the spiral, which I could not avoid. Allowing for the wind, I managed to control the spiral just enough to land on the only available landing ground in the vicinity. The landing was perfect, but the machine rolled into a ditch and tipped up on its nose. As I had cut the motor just before landing, the propeller was stopped and not a thing was broken. If the wing had been bent a quarter of an inch more, they would have carried me home. The machines they use here are old ones, and that was probably responsible for the accident. This weak spot of the Nieuport caused many deaths before anyone ever survived to tell what had happened. Again the gods were with me, and I lived to be the wiser.

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When I undid my belt and climbed out of the machine my hands were never steadier nor my mind more tranquil. Many Russians from the detention camp near by swarmed around, and I set them to work righting the plane and wheeling it over to a post, where an American was on guard.

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Leaving the machine in his care, I hit cross-country for the

aviation field. As I walked through the brushwood, the beauties of nature were possessed with renewed charm, the sea breeze laden with the scent of pine seemed a sweeter incense, the clouds were more billowy, my steps were wondrously buoyant, for I felt like one whom the gods had given special privilege to return among the treasures of his childhood. The passing of death's shadow is a stimulus to the charm of living.

Today I had an hour and a half of flying, and engaged in a sham combat of half an hour with another pilot. We both killed each other several times.

It is rumored that a plot was discovered in the Russian camp. They were to attack the camp here today at two o'clock and seize the armory. They had all the machine guns and armored planes ready and a guard around the school and camp, but nothing came of it. It would have furnished good target practice.

We get another *permission* New Years, but the trip to Paris is a long one, so I shall stay in Bordeaux. An invitation from Countess Duval for Christmas dinner at Arcachon was too late to reach me. I shall pay a call, as it is only an hour on the train from here.

### *Villa St. Jean, Arcachon, January 1, 1918.*

MY DEAR FAMILY:

Happy New Year. Fortune has again been very kind to me. You will remember the Duvals who were so kind to me when I had a forced landing at La Ferté-Imbault. When I left them, they gave me the address of their cousins at Arcachon, and said to be sure and let them know when I came down to Cazaux, so that they could write to their cousins, and give me an opportunity to meet more people of such charming hospitality. An invitation reaching me after my return from Christmas in Paris, invited me to Christmas dinner here at the Villa St. Jean, where I am writing. I acknowledged the invitation, and received another one for New Years dinner. I said I would call two days before New Years to pay my respects, and it was then that the Marchioness Duval asked me to come New Years. I remained that night and returned to the school, where four of us had to do patrol duty over the Russian camp. Returning to Arcachon that evening that I might stay at a hotel and so not have to rise for the early train, chance caused me to run across the Viscount Duval, who was returning on the same train from Bordeaux. He insisted that I return with him and spend the remainder of my leave with them, which I am doing.

Now, who are they? Lord only knows. I have not been able to distinguish their titles from their names yet, but finding me interested in pictures they thought perhaps I would be interested in looking over one of the family albums. It was a daughter-in-law of the Viscount Duval who showed me the album. The Countess Duval had three sons, the eldest an author of some note; the second owns Château Du Bois, and the third is the one with whom I am staying now. This family consists of a married daughter, formerly the Marchioness Duval, now Viscountess Richecourt; the son, married to the Marchioness Ribol; and the daughter, still the unmarried Marchioness Duval.

Devoting a short paragraph to the latter, which is her due. She is charming, beautiful, of what might be called the flower of French gentility, and is twenty-three. She speaks English very well, plays the piano and violoncello, and is much interested in art. She has not had so much time for these, however, since the war has centered her real interests in the soldiers at the Front. It was she who described the spirit of Frenchmen as "so beautiful." Speaking of a mass for their dead, which was held by the family some six months ago, the smile did not fade, but there was sadness in her voice as she said, "More than twenty-five of our poor boys had died at that time." That included cousins and second cousins of their family, but she said, "We must be happy." She just came in where we are all writing letters, with her hair hanging about her shoulders. I didn't notice what she was saying, but I think she was thanking me very much for a little sixty cent maiden-hair fern with a little white flower in the center which I brought her on the way from the barber shop as a New Years present. She set it on her desk. It will grow there.

They are going out to distribute meat to some poor people, so I shall go with them, and continue this anon.

This being anon, I have forgotten titles and history and nationality in the acquaintance of the finest people I have ever met.... There is a climax in one's estimate of the worthiness of people, and I believe I have reached it. Their fortunes and family have been irreparably depleted by the war, yet they devote all their time and energies to the poor, the wounded, and their soldiers on the firing line. They are French, yet knowing them has wiped out the possibility of superiority of nationality or race. They are Catholics, yet knowing them has wiped out the possibility of superiority of faith or religion. I do not understand their language well enough to know them as they are to be known, nor my own language well enough to give them their due. Their faith, their hope, their charity, is superior to any I have ever known.

They attend mass early and late. They share their prosperity among all. They fill their holidays with the writing of letters to those in the trenches who are theirs to cheer. I have known the home life of American families as I am seeing the life of this French family, and I am convinced that these people are no less superior in the art of living than in the other arts.

My standards of life and ambitions and ideals and philosophy are not so high as I thought they were. They fill the bill as far as self-restraint is concerned, but as for using the superior ability so gained in the benefiting of other lives I am almost wholly lacking. I thought my character was getting pretty well rounded out, and now I find it is still only a bulged seed, with the skin cracked by sudden growth.

Whether the atmosphere of this family is the indirect result of the war I rather doubt, but if America is to be subjected to such a renaissance this war is a blessing. This may all be enthusiasm on my part, but enthusiasm involving higher ideals seldom is dangerous. Every so often one bumps his head as he passes through the less prominent doorways in life, and is suddenly brought to realize that he has been asleep. My last bump is still on the rise. Since coming to France I have been resting, and now I am through. It is time to set a new pace for myself. It is a foolish thing to write that down, but it emphasizes the fact that it's the truth.

Another short paragraph to this girl. She is the first girl I have ever met who I am sure knows more than myself, and whose faith inspires all in me. The interesting details of the daily life of this family would hold your interest in many such letters as this, but they fall into such insignificance in the light of my admiration for their bigger qualities, that I cannot recall them.

For the present, I shall say good night. Tomorrow I fly. I am coming to take dinner here and stay all night day after tomorrow. I have not received mail since December 10, save one short letter from father.

Love to you all,  
YOUR SON.

*January 8, 1918.*

DEAR FATHER:

Check No. 7498 for 250 francs arrived yesterday. Thank you very much. I had four francs left. I am living at the home of the Duvals for the remainder of my stay at Cazaux. I'll tell you all about it when I have more time. Till then, know that the Prince of Ely is guest of honor to the best blood and truest people of France. Their daughter reads many English books and would like to read some American novels. Will you please send to me at 45 Ave. Montaigne the following books: *The Virginian*, by Owen Wister, *Laddie*, by Gene Stratton Porter, and *The Turmoil*, by Booth Tarkington. These depict American life as she would enjoy knowing it. She is giving me French books to read.

YOUR SON.

My final shooting record was very good, fourteen per cent at a flying target. The reward for merit, a two days' *permission*.

*Villa St. Jean, January 9, 1918.*

DEAREST FAMILY:

Here's to say that I am still enjoying your Christmas presents



and those of our kind friends. It is mighty good to eat the nuts and "rocks" that make me think of the home pantry. The only thing lacking is a great glass of milk. The money, too, came just in time. Not all of it came, but I have checks Nos. 7506, 7504, 7505, 7488, 7499, which will be good insurance against hard times for many a month, I hope. All my mail had been sent to my next address by the Personnel Department, and was returned by special request. The Personnel Department will continue to be my address until further notice.

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You asked what the Lafayette escadrille is. It is the continuation of the small group of American flyers who originally went into the French service in the early part of the war. Its signal service was made the basis of romantic interest and used to bind the feeling of friendship between France and America. The interest caused other Americans to seek admission in such numbers that a new division of the French Foreign Legion called the Lafayette Flying Corps, and, later, the Franco-American Flying Corps was formed. It was for selected Americans. The original Lafayette Flying Corps, a group of ten men, continued distinct. It was the Franco-American Flying Corps that I joined. Many men please to let the public believe that they are members of the Lafayette Flying Corps, and so profit by its valor. It is because of this that it is essential to keep one's position clear.

As to my letter which was so widely published—I am sorry that my name was attached. I find there is a distinct repulsion at seeing my name in print in connection with such an expression as "quiet valor." The letter described a milestone in my life, but in the world of aviation and the war at large such an incident is no more than a blow-out in an automobile race. To people not acquainted with aviation, it would be very interesting, indeed, but the name would not add much to its interest. The editor's comment was encouraging, but that he should think of the book which was recommended to all their reporters, is not so extraordinary; nor does it mean that my letter was on a level with it. It would be a great pleasure to me if I could turn my letter writing to actual advantage, but to do so in the first person, with name attached, is something I am not ready for. You spoke of all good things going into the *Post*. Did you mean the *Saturday Evening Post*? If it were possible to get an article in the *Saturday Evening Post*, I could aspire to that. I know that it is a pretty big thing, but every number has an article in it written by a night-shift reporter who got out to some aviation school over Sunday. What I have in mind for the *Post* is an article, not on aviation, which is already over-written, but on the intimate side of the French people, our allies.

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On this I want your advice and help if it proves possible. Everybody agrees that the United States waited too long before entering the war, but I always felt that it did right in waiting until the people were ready. However, having waited too long, it cannot take its full part except in that part of the war which remains. I do not believe that that fulfills its duty. As France has been the field of devastation it is to France that further aid should be given in completing the duty of the country. This could best be done in aiding her to recover after the war. This has all been thought of and acted upon to some extent in the States.

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One method suggested and perhaps carried out was that American towns should act as godmothers to French towns ruined in the battle front. This method is thoroughly practical if rightly carried out, and contains a touch of the romantic which would probably appeal to the public mind enough to interest it. It has been long since I left the States as far as the changes which have taken place are concerned. I suspect that the attitude has changed from "Help France to beat the Germans" to "Help the United States to beat the Germans." The result would be that where the godmother movement would have received hearty support earlier, it might now fail. It is of this I want you to tell me, if possible. Would the people, by the right method of approach, be willing to adopt a French town and subscribe quite liberally to its rebuilding, and does the government permit such donations?

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The United States is athrob with the scale of its task and the enthusiasm of its attack. It pats itself on the shoulder that a liberty loan of two or three billion dollars should be oversubscribed. Though one heard very little about it in street conversation in French towns and Paris, the French oversubscribed a two billion liberty loan after three years and a half of this war. This speaks for itself.

But to return to the godmother movement. I have been asked by the family Duval if such a thing were possible and if I might be able to find the ways and means of doing it. The town is one in which their family is interested and they wish to take the responsibility of looking out for its welfare after the war. I have not talked with the people who are directly interested and in charge of detailed information concerning it. I shall see them in Paris in a few days and may withhold this letter till then.

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I am going to write to Dr. Gordon, Mr. Davies, and Professor Lawrence to find their opinion on the possibility of raising such a godmother fund. Professor Lawrence spoke of the possibility of architectural societies sending representatives to engineer the building of such towns. My letters to these people will be brief, written from the position of one speaking for friends here who wish to know possibilities.

Just a glance at the possibilities will show you the cause of my interest. I am interested in France, and if I could spend a year of my life in doing some such service, it would be no more than I believe any American owes. I might even take charge of the rebuilding of the town. It would benefit France, as you can see. It would benefit America in making stronger the feeling of love between herself and France. It would gratify the Duvals, who have been so kind to me. As for me, it would give me permanent access to the best that France can offer; an opportunity of architectural study and practice are among other things. Tell me what you think of it.

YOUR SON.

*Arcachon, January 13, 1918.*

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DEAR FAMILY:

I'll tell you what the Duvals have done for me and let you judge what kind of friends they are. First, they invited me to Christmas dinner, and having failed to reach me, invited me again for New Years. They have insisted that I stay with them, and so I have had dinner and afternoon tea here every afternoon and stayed all night since that time, and have spent my four days' leave with them. During that time their interest in my pleasure has not relaxed in the least, yet there has been no feeling they were neglecting their duties for my pleasure. Finding that I loved music, there has been hardly an afternoon that other people of musical talent were not invited to tea, the Duvals, themselves, being very musical. Among these people have been some of the finest women of France, many of them daughters of French nobility of the last three centuries.

On January 3 the aviation school gave itself over to a fête day in honor of a delegation of the neutral countries of the world. All the guns were firing from morning until night, and all the aeroplanes were constantly in flight. The delegation consisted of the principal dignitaries of the countries they represented and were arrayed in gorgeous attire.

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Conducted about in automobiles by the commandant of the school, they beheld with strained dignity, the war preparation of France. We pilots discussed among ourselves these dukes and lords of different skins, whom the French call "Neuters." The work finished and pomp dismissed, I went as usual in the officers' special truck to Arcachon. The array of automobiles before the door warned me of what was coming, so I swallowed my surprise successfully when I was ushered in among the array of "high-heads" to inspect their medals at close range. As I passed from room to room all the Duvals, each in turn, stepped out from their "Neuter" guests with marked cordiality to say how glad they were to see me, and where it was convenient, introduced me to the others as an "American aviator in the French Foreign Legion." It always pleased me to note the embarrassment of the duke or prince in question when he tried to decide whether or not he should shake hands with me. When they seemed anxious to do so, I permitted it. Then Catherine Duval, the daughter, led me to the next prettiest girl in the room and said I would find her charming. We talked of music and the difference between French and American girls. Meanwhile, the "Neuters" were trying to make their school-French a common meeting ground.

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In the next room, the sister of my partner was occupied with a gentleman from Argentina. She being a very charming girl, he

proceeded to scatter "bouquets" with glances ardent. "Of course," said she, "while you are paying me pretty speeches here, your brother may be suing the favor of some general's daughter in Berlin." The "Neuter" lapsed to more commonplace remarks. If you knew what the French have endured, you could excuse her frankness.

Among those present were first consul to the king of Spain, the prince of Siam, and others of the same hue. They departed, and as I happened to be near the door when the migration started, most of them thanked me for their pleasant time; the rest admitted the honor. Then we had a little music feast; the girl with whom I had talked has a voice which would be ready for Grand Opera in three years. Oh! They are all so absolutely charming that I shall never be content till you meet them. You may begin to plan now on a trip to France after the war.

They had not told me of their intention to entertain this delegation lest perhaps I would not have come. How courteous. But they didn't know me.

Their family is numerous. The man in charge of the delegation was a cousin. Another cousin is on the staff of the school here at Cazaux, having been incapacitated by service at the Front; he said he would be pleased to do anything he could for me at the school. Another cousin, an aviator, with eight Boche to his official credit, and twice as many actually, who is chief of his escadrille and came down to this school to give lectures, has been staying here for four days. He is twenty-four, and a charming fellow. I asked if he would permit me to apply for admission to his escadrille, and he said he also would make the request, and that it might well be accomplished. It might mean a matter of life and death some day to be in the escadrille whose chief was personally interested in one. Two years ago, this boy's brother was brought down in a fighting plane. Two days later the father and mother took this boy to Paris and enlisted him in aviation to fill his brother's place—and he has filled it. Do you get the spirit?

A captain whom I met here was a civilian at the beginning of the war. His son enlisted in the infantry, and he enlisted, too, that he might be by his son's side. His son died in his arms. Now the father is a captain, but his lips turn white when he speaks of the Germans. Do you get the spirit?

The First Dragoons are a company of cavalry whose ranks have been filled by certain families for generations. One of them was killed. The boy's father, a captain of infantry, resigned his position and enlisted as a private to fill that place in the First Dragoons which had been occupied by his son, his father, and his grandfather before him. Do you get the spirit?

Do you see why I say that the United States can still bare its head to France without loss of self-respect? Do you see why, though American, I feel it something of an honor to remain for a time in the French Army?

Just to give you an idea of what I have in mind, I'll tell you the possibilities, but bear in mind that is all conjecture, guided more by my own reason than by knowledge of what is taking place. At first, all men entering United States aviation were made first lieutenants. Some of these, still unable to fly, are in this country helping to build barracks. Others were taken from the French Army as first lieutenants and are already making use of their experience at the Front. It is now the policy of the United States to give first lieutenancies to aviators only when they get to service at the Front; they are second lieutenants until then. In other words, they started out by throwing first lieutenancies about before they could judge the men that were getting them, and they are having to back down by making men of superior training inferior in office to men who have received commissions without the training. This is obviously unfair, and although I can see why it is necessary, I do not propose to suffer by their mistake and permit myself to be cramped in service by accepting too low a position in the U. S. Army. We signed papers applying for the offer of first lieutenancy about four months ago, and no steps have been taken until very lately. Now some of the men have been released from the French Army, but are not yet taken into the U. S. I may be among them and will find out when I go to Paris. I think, however, that an intentional failure to sign a duplicate application for release from the French Army may have prevented my release. In that case, I can go into a French escadrille and get a couple of months' service and experience with the French before they can accomplish

anything with their red tape. By that time, U. S. aviation will be turning out men and planes in preparation for the summer or fall drive, and will need men with practical experience as heads of the escadrille which they will want to put on the Front. As there are so many first lieutenant aviators, it will be necessary to make the chiefs of their escadrilles captains. By that time I will have had experience, a clear record, and a good recommendation from the French. It seems reasonable to me that I will be in a position then to ask for a captaincy, and it is this course of action that I propose to follow. In staying with the French I must be self-supporting. If I do not play my cards correctly I might be refused a commission in the U. S. Army, but that would be rather unlikely. It really depends greatly upon that signature of release from the French. I feel, however, that I will eventually get what I deserve—whatever that may be—and I await results. Meanwhile, I am serving the Cause as much as an aviator can.

I have before me another letter to you as long as this, which I will not mail until I talk with Countess Duval in Paris, whom the letter concerns.

My love is with you all. Be content that you are in America. Coal may be high—but it is better than no coal. People in France don't eat butter. Lump sugar is jewelry.

Ever your son,  
DINSMORE.

*Villa St. Jean, January 13, 1918.*

DEAR FAMILY:

I forgot to say that I have five days' *permission* as a reward for raising the school record in aero marksmanship from twenty-two per cent to twenty-seven and a half per cent. It is the first thing which is actual cause for believing that I may be a successful fighting pilot. Many men can fly and many can shoot very well, but the combination of the two is the rare thing which much increases one's opportunity for service and chance for survival in the struggle for existence over the lines.

The test is made on a sleeve the size of the body of the smallest aeroplane. This sleeve is dragged behind another aeroplane traveling at sixty or seventy miles per hour. The plane I drove had a speed of 100 to 120 miles per hour, and the machine gun is fired from it, and mechanically arranged to shoot through the propeller. You approach the sleeve from various directions, making snap judgments as to target and shooter's deflection, which I explained in another letter, and then fire six or eight shots at a time at a range varying from 600 to 75 feet. The centering of the bullets is important. You have a hundred shots.

Your son,  
DINSMORE.

*Plessis Belleville, France, January 17, 1918.*

DEAR BOB:

Seven of us fellows met in Paris after a five days' *permission* and took the train for this place. We arrived at about four in the afternoon, and it was raining about one hundred per cent. We piled our luggage into the truck and climbed up on top of it. It was some ride! By the time darkness fell we had become skilful enough to keep our balance on top of the luggage. It was very dangerous to ride that way. I understand why they give aviators the balance test. We pulled in here in the dark and waded half a mile through mud three inches deep, and mounted to the second story of a one-story building where they served us a three-course dinner in one course. We used the same half mile of mud to get back to the barracks. The question came up as to how we were to get our baggage into the barracks from the trucks, so we carried it in. Meanwhile, the rain kept up its standard. I forgot to mention we had been dressed in our best clothes. My hat was covered with mud because it had fallen off; the rain washed the cap, and that's how the mud got into my eyes. We were to sleep on boards. I had my bed made when a Frenchman came along and offered me a mattress, as he had two. I wanted to be generous and give it to one of the other fellows, but I thought it would hurt the Frenchman's

feelings, so I used it myself to sleep on. But yesterday I put the mattress under the boards; I do not think he will notice the change and it is more comfortable. The saving grace of it all is that we have a great bunch of fellows. We have what *we* French call *esprit de corps*, meaning in your English language "good spirit." We sing when rained upon and laugh when we are sad. They are all pretty straight fellows and do not let people stumble over their crooks. It is only when others thrust their faults upon you that you object to their faults. One might write a nice discourse on the moral rights of a person to pollute the free atmosphere with the expression of poisonous thoughts. But these fellows do not do that.

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In passing through Paris, I found that I can remain in the French Army at my option, which I choose to do for some months. I am slowly using up the great stock of clothing I brought over with me. The hip boots are best just now. I was dressed in my brown sweater, my American campaign hat, black boots, and rain coat. I had just finished signing up, when I heard the door open and smelled some one come in. It was a mixture of Port and Burgundy wines that I smelled. Having heard that the captain had a taste for wine, I wheeled around and came to a salute. He looked me over, up and down, and asked me who I was. I said I was an American in the *Legion Étrangère*, and that I had purchased my clothes at Marshall Field & Company's on Washington Street, in Chicago. I knew he didn't like my camouflage, because he turned to an assistant and said, "Dress this man in a complete French uniform." The man took me in another room and tried on the clothes. I let him. When he started to hand me a blue flag, I looked at him questioningly. So he sat down on the floor and folded the flag lengthwise, running it over his knee to make the creases stay. When he finished, it was a two-inch band which he wound about my neck, gave a cross hitch, and pinned it with a pin he bit out of the lower corner of his coat. He was very serious all the time. He gave me a cap of the type discarded by the Miners' Union in 1883. Except when I see the captain coming, I wear it under my coat. My new uniform is sky blue in rainy weather. In my next letter I'll tell you how it looks when the sun shines. When the weather improves, we may fly.

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We are in the war zone now, about thirty-two miles from the Front. We can see the flare of artillery in the sky and hear the guns on a clear night. Today we took a walk to a village seven miles away, and crossed a road where many trains of trucks were passing with supplies. That begins to sound exciting, doesn't it? In each village the houses are marked with the numbers of men and horses they can accommodate. I should be excited, but I'm not, because I'll not see the Front for another month.

Your ever lovin' brother,  
DINS.

*January 19, 1918.*

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DEAR FAMILY:

Today I received twenty-five letters dating from November 1 to December 1....

A little tin box containing sugar, candy, and candied pineapple came day before yesterday. I ate it nearly all by myself, though I share all other things. The big can of candy sent by Mr. Buchanan has set open to the barracks for three days and has been a great pleasure to all of us. A knitted sweater from a Boston girl whose father was a "Tech" man, came, and I have all the warm things I could wish for and all the money I can use for three or four months. I may go to Nice on my next *permission*, with some of my Christmas money. Father's check No. 7499 for 250 francs came. Thank you for all these things. Those five pictures of the cabin touch a chord of their own.

We are near the Front now—twenty-five miles. Last night we saw the great searchlights playing and the star shells floating at the end of their fiery arcs. But the country here is fertile and well cared for, and the only signs of war are a few scattered graves of unknown victims of the battle of the Marne. We take long walks when not at work—work being the business of waiting for a chance to fly. There were seven machines broken yesterday and no one hurt; expenses for the day must have been thirty thousand dollars. It is a rich man's game. I had four rides. The machines are better

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here.

Today I got half a cup of water, so I washed my teeth. Next Sunday I shall shave. I cleaned my boots from a puddle in the road. Water is scarcer than wine, but I am still teetotaling. I am tired tonight.

Good night,  
YOUR SON.

*January 20, 1918.*

MA CHÈRE FAMILLE:

Yesterday I made an appointment with the town barber to have him cut my hair at 5:15 P.M. I was quite prompt but found him unprepared. He lived off a little court yard which was connected by a close to the main alley of the borough. In crossing the threshold of the kitchen I entered the tonsorial parlor. His work bench was next to the family range, and a moth-eaten mirror reflected pox-marked people. The madame set the chair in the middle of the room and brought the scissors and comb from the other room. The twelve-year old offspring was arrested in the midst of rolling a cigarette when his father commanded him to hold the lamp. So the little fellow stood transfixed with the half-rolled cigarette in one hand and the family lamp in the other. Every time the father hesitated, the boy tried to set down the lamp and finish the cigarette, but the father would jump to it again and keep the boy from making any headway. Believe it, the boy kept his father hard at it. Sometimes the lamp nearly lost its balance, but the cigarette kept level, so I took to watching the cigarette. He never would have succeeded in rolling it if the father hadn't had to go to the shed to get the clippers. As it was, he returned before the boy could light up. Meanwhile, the old dame, who needed a shave more than I did a hair cut, was preparing to feed the animals. Once when she was leaning over me to get a dipper of water out of the pail under the barber's table, she lost her balance and fell into my lap. But she didn't spill the water and the old man didn't miss a clip. She would stop her work from time to time and come over with folded arms to see how the hair was coming off. The professor didn't cut any off the top. When I suggested that he cut just a little I think it hurt his feelings, because he changed my hair from a "Broadway-comb-back" to a "Sing-Sing-sanitary" in about ten strokes. But it was the quickest hair cut I ever had and he didn't tell me I needed a shampoo, so I gave him eight cents instead of six.

YOUR SON.

*January 31, 1918.*

DEAR BOB:

It has been wonderfully clear for the past three nights, and in the light of a big London raid, the French have been expecting a raid on Paris. Last night I went to bed early. Thump—thump—boom—boom—boom; I rolled over to sleep on the other side. Boom—boom—bang—bang—bang; my ears felt funny and I turned over on my back and looked at the ceiling. Bang—crash—crash—thunder; something must be wrong. I sat up in bed, to see figures passing the moonlit windows and voices whispering between the continuous detonations which jarred the night air. Someone lit a light, and a hiss went up from the barracks. One heard the words "Boche" and "bomb" oft repeated. I yawned and pulled on the other sock. We could hear the hum of motors as we crowded out of the barracks doors, scantily clad.

The air was crisp and clear. The moon was just rising. It was twelve-thirty, and there were stars in millions. Now the crashes came just over our heads. First, over to the east, just behind a clump of trees not half a mile away we would see a couple of sudden flares; then came the crash of the report, followed by the receding war song of the shells as they went up through the darkness; then would come the bright glare which would blind the sight and scare away the stars, leaving the sky black; and finally, as we would blink and begin to see the stars venturing forth again, the great crash of the shell on high would reach us. Then we would discuss how close they may have come to the place and whether

the falling shells would come near us. But the hum of the planes came and went in the direction of Paris without our seeing them, for only the explosion of shells marked their course across the sky. We are thirty miles from Paris. For fifteen minutes we watched the explosions of the anti-aircraft shells. Then suddenly there were low grumbings, booming with increasing rapidity of succession. The groups of lights signaling in the Paris Guard formation flashed off and on, changing location with great rapidity. Then came the returning hum of the motors, the line of shells flaring in the sky, a series of red-rocket signals, and the raid was over.

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Today I had my first rides in the Spad. It is the most wonderful machine going. It has an eight-cylinder motor, and is built like a bulldog. It is the finest thing in aeroplanes, and I certainly hope I get one at the Front.

The first copy of *Life* came yesterday. Say, you couldn't have given me a present that would cause us all more pleasure. I read every word of it, and now it is going the rounds. Thank you for it ever so much.

Well, we have an *appel* (roll-call) and I must stop. Love to you all. Write me when you can.

Your ever lovin' brother,  
DINS.

*February 10, 1918.*

DEAR FAMILY:

The first week here was restless, the second nerve-wrecking, and now I have relaxed and settled down to pleasant, contented routine which varies according to the weather. When it rains or is foggy, I come over alone to a little wine shop in a near-by village; its name is Tagny-le-Sec. Here I have chocolate, toast, and butter for *petit déjeuner* (little breakfast). Then I write and read and draw according to my whim till lunch time. If the sky has not cleared in the afternoon, I go for a walk and up to the barracks where I lie down and read until supper. After supper a bunch of us go to a wine shop and talk until roll-call at nine o'clock.

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When the weather is favorable, we stand out on the field eight hours a day waiting our turn to fly; that is a strain. Usually we fly a half hour a day, but at times, one may go three or four days without a flight, but no matter how long you wait, a single half hour in the air satisfies all desire for action, excitement, and exercise for the time being. That is one of the strange things about aviation. Though a man is strapped in his seat and moves no part of his body more than three inches, an hour in the air will keep him in excellent physical condition, provided he is nervously fitted for the work. And the mind and eyes are equally fatigued. Absolute concentration is necessary. The more I see of the game, the more I believe that nine-tenths of the accidents and deaths are due to the inability of the pilot to concentrate or to recognize that concentration is necessary.

We are using the best and fastest fighting plane now, the Spad, Guynemer's plane. In starting, one must immediately throw every nerve into stress to keep the machine in its given course; not doing so means a quick turn, a crushing of the running gear, and a broken wing. This is an inexcusable accident with a trained pilot; yet it happens about once a day because someone is only three-fourths on the job. In gaining speed, the machine must be brought to its line of flight, the danger here being to tip it too far forward and break the propeller on the ground. This is easy to prevent, and so is inexcusable, yet it happens once a week because someone forgets himself. There is danger in leaving the ground too soon, and danger in mounting too quickly.

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About one pilot a month is killed at the Front by attempting to mount too quickly while close to the ground. At a height of twenty feet, one must be all alert for sharp heat waves that are liable to get under one wing. When one comes to make the first turn, there is danger of too great a bank allowing the head-on wind to get under the high wing and slide you down, yet this almost never happens because by the time the pilot is up there he is all present. All this time he must have been alert for arriving and departing machines which are dangerous, not only because of collision, but because of the turbulent current of air they leave in their wake. One machine passing through the wake of another acts like a wild

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goose frightened by a passing bullet.

As the pilot gains height and distance from the field he may begin to relax and get his geographical bearings, and it is well for him to do so, for the strain he was under in those first thirty seconds would exhaust him in fifteen minutes. He can then glance over his gauges and listen to his motor. When he gets to a thousand or fifteen hundred meters he can lean back, throttle down his motor, and count the clouds with a freedom from worry which the motorist never knows. At the Front of course it is different. There the pilot must make a complete study of the whole horizon every thirty seconds to be sure of his safety from enemy planes, meanwhile changing his course and height continually to evade the anti-aircraft shells. Most pilots are brought down at the Front by surprise, which again is due to lack of concentration.

Having had a pleasant flight and enjoyed the beauties of nature, it is time to drift down to the home roost. You locate the hangars, cut your engine down low, and strike your peaking angle. The good old machine purrs like a kitten, the clouds whisk by, you breathe a sigh of relief and wonder if dinner will be any better than lunch. Well, anyway, it was a good ride. And just there is where "dat dar grimacin' skeleton pusson begins to rattle dem bones." Maybe you have let the plane flatten out its peaking angle a little and lost your velocity. Maybe the engine was turning over a good speed because of your descent when you last noticed it. Maybe the evening air has quieted down somewhat and it was safe enough to drift along and settle as long as you had altitude. But now that you are fifty meters from the ground and the *piece* two or three hundred meters away and you have come to horizontal flight a little and your plane is slowly losing its speed of descent and your engine is still throttled down too slow to even roll you along the ground—and the sunset is beautiful—like a hole in the sidewalk, your plane gives a sudden lurch, you jump all over and find your controls "mushy"—you slip sideways, the ground coming at you—you jerk open the throttle—the motor, cold from the descent, chokes a bit—you can see the grass blades red in the sun—then she catches! God bless that motor—she booms! There is a moment of clenched teeth while the plane wavers in its slide, and then she bounds forward, skimming the ground, gaining speed just in time to clear those deadly telegraph wires. With eyes set on the horizon, you let her sink, and every nerve tense, she pulls her tail down, touches the ground in a three-point landing like a gull on the wave. She rolls up and stops; you take a breath and feel the color come back to your cheeks. Slowly you raise your glasses to your forehead and undo your belt. Slowly you raise yourself out and drop to the ground. Pensively you wander back into the group of aviators who watched you land.

"Some landing like a duck," says an American.

"*Très bien*," says the monitor. But you go over and lean against a tent pole silent, and without a smile. You know what your comrades do not know—that "a fool there was," and he lives by a fool's luck. And you swear an oath to yourself and the dear old world that you'll never be caught like that again.

Most everyone has the experience sooner or later and almost everyone lives to be a wiser and more prudent man, not excluding

Your son,  
DINS.

*February 13, 1918.*

DEAR FAMILY:

We are right here among the pines. Great forests of splendid Norways stretch away over the rolling sandy country, broken only by the clearing around some old manor château with its radiating vistas and its towers standing white amidst the green. Would you think that France with its dense population and old culture would be covered with great forests, almost primeval in the abandon of their growth? Throw in a few lakes and it would be Wisconsin.

Yesterday I cut the noonday roll-call and succeeded in losing myself as an excuse. As I swung along the road, I could feel the spirit of the blazed trail humming in the pine boughs; and my breath came deep. Here was a clearing with the logs fallen and the smallest branches cut and tied in neat sheaves—there, off to the right, was a hill which mounted above the tree tops. I climbed to



the top and saw the stretch of woods on all sides with here and there a rock-strewn, barren stretch of sand. Going down the other side, a pheasant clapped up from under foot and made me start. As my eyes glanced along the trail ahead of my wandering feet, I saw many deer tracks. They say that since the war, wolves are not infrequent; and have we not heard of wolves in the streets of Paris not many decades ago? Now and then a rabbit bobbed out of sight. It soothed me and yet made me homesick. Out there in the open woods with the gentle spirit of the mighty pines, I could not help despairing at the question, "What good is war?"

Today we had an accident. A machine had mounted to fifty meters when it stopped climbing and started to lose speed. It turned to come back to the *piece*, but slipped sideways and fell in "*vrille*," and crashed headlong to the ground. The tail broke backward and the motor gave a final groan, as in a death struggle. Men covered their eyes. It was a quarter of a mile away. All started to run, and I was first there. The pilot, a little Frenchman with whom I had been exchanging French, had crawled out on top of the wreck. He sat shut in by the wreckage. There was a whimper on his face. I climbed up on the wreckage and held him in my arms. He called me by name and then managed to tell me that his arm was broken. Well, you can imagine how relieved I was. I handed him out to the others who had arrived by this time. The doctor came up and cut the clothes away from his arm. There was no bruise nor blood, and as he began to regain his color, we tried to divert his mind. About the first thing he asked for was a piece of the propeller for a souvenir. Well, we put him on a stretcher and into the captain's car and went to the hospital in a little town, Senlis, some two miles away. He seemed to prefer me to all his French friends. The hospital was a nice old Catholic institution, with old Sisters and young Red Cross nurses. We left him contented and resigned to his lot of another two or three months before reaching the Front.

The village in which we found the hospital has been heavily shelled in the early days of the war. Every third or fourth house was a monumental ruin to the price of war, but by some happy chance the two beautiful cathedrals of the town had been spared, yet the ruins seemed very old and the vines which formerly climbed the walls now fell about the broken stones and trailed through the blind windows, giving the whole an aged aspect; and between these ruins were the untouched abodes of unconscious inhabitants.

Truly your  
SON.

DEAR FAMILY:

A letter clipping describes that part of France which is shrouded in the historic pages of knights and kings; that part which has pleased me so much when written by another, makes me think of the poorer classes who have lived and died in the environment of their birthplaces without ambition, that those knights and kings might carve their deeds of blood on shields of gold.

In this great war, these poorer classes, peasants still, are the *poilus* who keep the trench mud from driving them mad by that pint of the red French wine, and they sit about me now in a little old wine shop whose many-colored bottles, oft refilled, are as numerous in shapes and styles as the decades they have served. The walls are spotted and stained, and the ceilings smoked, but the delicate moldings in the stone tell of a day when this was the thriving hostelry of the village. Now the poorly dressed, worn-out veterans of the Great War bend over the scarred tables and confer or wrangle as to how their work, so hard begun, will end.

DINSMORE.

*February 18, 1918.*

DEAR FAMILY:

I am told that the American captain at this school is looking for me to offer me a second lieutenancy in the U. S. Army. I must decide immediately, and I am tempted to toss a coin.

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*Well, this is the result:* I signed for the release from the army

Français. I was refused a *permission* to Paris and took it anyway to find out from the American authorities what would become of me. My trip to Paris was unsuccessful. I returned to camp late at night, and when I awoke in the morning I was told that the *permission* had been granted after all and that I had been ordered to the Front at eleven o'clock that day in Escadrille S 102, Sector Postal 160, located near Toul. I stopped over at Paris a day and a half and landed here day before yesterday. So now, God be praised, I am at the Front. It has taken eight months to come to it, but I guess it will be worth it.

YOUR SON.

*Near Toul, France, February 26, 1918.*

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DEAR FATHER:

Plessis Belleville was a great strain. I had to fight the curse of idleness and it is a losing fight, as with a man who is muscle bound who tires himself out. Reading, studying French, drawing and walking helped, but they were a failure through lack of inspiration. No Americans had been sent to the Front and there was a rumor that we were to be held there till the United States took us over. Then came the offer of our commissions as second lieutenants, and so inactive had our minds become that it upset us to decide. I asked for my release from the French Army although it is not what I wished to do; yet it seemed best. It means that I could hardly expect to go to the Front in French service and might have to wait months for action in United States service. I was in despair.

The next morning I asked for a *permission* of twenty-four hours in Paris. It was refused. I took the eleven o'clock train the next morning with an officer. I myself was mistaken for an officer. He was good company. We went and had a Turkish bath. That night I went to the opera. In the morning my *marraine's* grandchildren came up to see me. I held them in my arms. Children seem to love me. I think children's love protects people from wrong and trouble.

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That day I found that I could not learn anything from the U. S. Army, so I went to the opera again in the afternoon, but it was poor. Then I walked in the crowds and laughed at all who would laugh with me. After a good dinner, I rode back to Plessis with a pretty girl who was good company. That night sleep came easily and was sound.

The hoodoo was broken.

The next morning when I awoke, they told me I was to leave for the Front at eleven o'clock. I was assigned to the French Escadrille S 102, Sector Postal 160, near Toul. Well, I was busy packing and getting papers signed and saying good-bye to everyone. So now I was just where I wished to be.

It is the custom to take two days in Paris without permission on your way to the Front. My *marraine* was surprised to see me back so soon. I spent the day shopping and then we went to see Gaby Deslys last night. We sat with three American soldiers who had asked us to get their tickets for them. The show was full of pep and American songs, besides having some really wonderful dancing. Between acts there was a regular New York "jazz" band playing in the foyer. It was a jolly way to say good-bye to Paris.

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My *marraine* had received your letter telling of wiring me money. As I have received no mail whatever for more than three weeks I knew nothing of it. I deposited the money in the Guaranty Trust Company of New York, 1 and 3 Boul. des Italiens, Paris. I have a trunk at the Cécilia Hôtel, 12 Ave. Mac-Mahon, Paris. With me I have two duffelbags and a suitcase. At the "Tech" Club, University Union, 8 Rue Richelieu, Paris, are some films and key to my trunk. There are some post cards and perhaps a few odds and ends at my *marraine's*. Thanks very much for the money; I hope I shall not have to use it.

Well, I went down to the station, and just naturally took the train for the Front as if I were going to Milwaukee (if such a city does exist anymore). There were three American flyers still in the French Army on the train. Wallman, Hitchcock, and another; the first two have been doing exceptional work lately. They explained to me how to kill German flyers, and I am quite anxious to try it now. We passed through some towns which had been shelled, but they didn't look so terribly bad. Arriving at Toul I descended and informed the captain by telephone that I had arrived. An

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automobile was there in twenty minutes to take me out.

So I am just where I have been working for eight months to get, namely, in a French escadrille, at the Front; flying the best French monoplanes, fighting plane, and with a commission (only a second lieutenant) in the American Army waiting for me. All I wish for now is to be completely forgotten by both French and American authorities until I give them particular reason to remember me; and this may very easily happen (the forgetting part).

And now I am living in a nice little room, which with the room adjacent, is shared by four Frenchmen; one of them is an architect of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. In the morning chocolate and toast is served to us in bed, as is the French custom. We rise at eleven and have the day to do as we wish, provided it is not good flying weather. Breakfast is served at twelve and supper at seven.

The first day was rainy, but the second day was beautiful, and the captain, who is a corker, gave me a ride in one of the best machines. It was only for forty minutes to look about the country, and of course I did not go near the lines, but I was very lucky to get a ride at all. It will be some time before I have a machine of my own and can work regularly, but that is what I look forward to. Yesterday two Boche planes came over, and the anti-aircraft guns blazed away at them, but all the good it did was to reassure me in the fear of their guns; when they hit it is by accident.

Last night I heard booming and stepped out of the back door. The moon was full and the sky clear. But the whole sky in front of the moon was mackerel flecked with the puffs of anti-aircraft shells. This was literally true, the sky was speckled as thickly as with stars. A minute after I was out a plane passed before the moon, and for thirty seconds I could see the light reflected on its wing. But the number of shots they fired at it appalled me. You could see the little burst of flame which left its puff of smoke. They went off at the rate of seven a second, and they kept it up steadily for twenty minutes. Get out your pencil. The air was still and the smoke remained; probably the smoke from the first shell could be seen to the last (8,400 puffs in twenty minutes and every puff worth \$100—\$840,000 without getting the effect). As a matter of fact, I imagine it was more for the moral effect upon the populace of the town being bombarded than anything. All night the sullen boom of the cannon can be heard, one boom a second, every other minute. It sounds like a heavy person walking on the floor above. We are twenty miles from the Front and we can get there in thirteen minutes.

Well, I shall probably have some interesting things to write these days, though it is possible that it will be deader here than anywhere else; that is sometimes the case.

Today it was cloudy and I went down to the village and made a couple of sketches of the cathedral which is very fine indeed. There is months of study in it alone.

Good night all; my love to everyone.

Your son,  
DINSMORE.

*Escadrille S 102, S. P. 160, March 5, 1918.*

DEAR FAMILY:

It will soon be boresome if I trouble you to read of all my narrow escapes. As a matter of fact aviation is so full of them that they become almost commonplace. What happened this time was only an incident of the training for real encounters. There is a little lake near here, and in it is a German aeroplane as a target. We go over and dive at that target and shoot. It is the second good flying day we have had. The captain told me to go over and shoot. On my first drive at the target I shot two handfuls of bullets. I had been peaking 200 meters with full motor. I pulled the machine up too quickly and there was a rip, a crash, and the machine shot into a vertical bank upward. I swung into *ligne de vol* by crossing controls. A glance at my wing showed the end of the lower right wing torn away. The machine was laboring but I still could guide it, so I returned to the school and landed without mishap. It was one more miracle of a charmed life that I returned. They all came out to congratulate me. Well, sir, the whole front edge of my lower right wing was broken away and bent down. The end of the wing was gone and shreds of braces and cloth dangled along. I really

cannot understand why a machine has a lower right wing when you can come home without it. It was caused by too brutal handling at a formidable speed. I had been led to understand that a Spad could peak 500 meters with full motor and redress quite strongly. I had only peaked 175 with three-quarters motor, which I learned was far too much. I begin to think I am a fool, for reason tells me anyone but a fool would have been afraid. But, honestly, there was no more fear than with a blow-out on a tire. Yet all the way home I knew that it would be probable death if anything more went wrong. I came home because I knew the landing ground and it was only five minutes' flight.

DINS.

*March 12, 1918.*

DEAR FAMILY:

In the first place, we are all sad because our captain leaves us today. He is a wonderful man and everyone loves him immediately and always. I have only been here three weeks and yet I wanted to weep. As for him, the tears ran down his cheeks when he said *au revoir, mes amis* (good-bye, my friends). Another takes his place.

Last night gave a pleasant diversion. It started with a visit to our squadron of a group of aeroplane spotters for the United States balloon service. At their head was the first lieutenant by the name of Grant, from Ohio. He fell into conversation and it developed that he was a very good friend of "Stuff" Spencer's at Yale. We proved interested in each other's work and he invited me to come over to have dinner at his camp, located some twelve kilometers from here. I said I'd be glad to some time. He left soon after.

I went over and shot a few rounds at the target, this time without mishap. At about five the craving to walk was upon me, so I took the road leading to the balloon camp, hardly expecting to reach it. With the help of passing trucks I came to the camp, and passed through a town swarming with Americans. Along the roads were blocks of American trucks and ambulances, waiting for darkness to hide their movements. Many mistook me for a French officer and saluted. Those who answered my questions of inquiry stood at attention and replied with "sir." I wanted to shake hands with them all for they acted as if they had been at it for years. When I came to the officers' quarters I was introduced to them as into a college fraternity. I was proud rather than angered at having to salute them. They were gentlemen. Now I know why college men will make the best officers. They had a victrola, good food, good *esprit de corps*. I stayed all night and came back this morning. Well, I want to be a member of the American organization. With all its youngness and inexperience, it is good. God give it speed. I shall go over there again.

This showed me another thing: it is quite simple for me to go to points of interest within a radius of fifteen miles from here and return by morning, this giving me an opportunity for seeing other branches of the service. I am reading up on ballooning, aerial photography, and map work, artillery *réglage* and reconnaissance, and after that I shall study U. S. Army regulations and also wireless. I may have to change at any time to the United States forces, in which case I wish to be in a position to compete with the men I shall find in it.

It seems to me in my last letter I told you of an accident while shooting and said they were common. Well, since then I have had a real accident, so miraculous in its outcome than I am superstitious as a result. You have read of bandits whose bodies could not be marred by bullets. The gods must be saving me for something. Father has always feared a speed greater than twenty-five miles an hour in an automobile. One has the impression that to hit anything at that speed is very apt to kill one. Also, you know the marked increase in speed between twenty-five and thirty-five miles per hour. Say you have gone fifty miles an hour. Now imagine yourself going twice that fast along a precipice road. Suddenly the machine comes to the edge of the cliff, and plunges out into space, at a hundred miles an hour, and down three hundred feet into a pine forest below. Picture what you would find if you went down and looked into the remains of such an accident. Well, the equivalent happened to me. As soon as I hit I cut the spark and turned the cock which relieves pressure from the gas tank, to prevent fire;

released the belt which held me in my seat; reached up and pulled myself out of the wreckage by the limb of a tree which had fallen over my head; and made my way through the underbrush without turning to look at the machine. As I stepped out upon a road half a mile away, a Red Cross Ford came along and took me to a near-by village. There I ate a heavy meal while talking to the madame's daughter, and then telephoned for them to come and get me. When they arrived we were all singing and playing at the piano.

It was my first flight over the lines. I had been flying alone up and down our sector for half an hour. I had seen seven Boche planes a few miles off, but they had immediately disappeared in the clouds. From the first my motor had been running cold. I had attained the height of 4,700 meters. When I started to come down I found it impossible to descend and yet keep the motor warm enough to run. Clouds had gathered below. I tried to wing slip, but still the temperature of the motor dropped. So I wing slipped through the clouds. I had not planned on it, but they were 2,000 meters thick. I came down from 2,800 to 800 meters in some fifteen seconds, a rate of considerably over 250 miles an hour. If the fog had not been so thick the outcome would have been different for the engine would not have gotten so cold, but by the time I could think of adjusting my motor I was at 400. When I found the motor would not work it was fifty, and over a pine wood. I tried to turn back to a field, but started to wing slip, which is death, so I straightened out, let it slow down a bit, and then pointed it down into the trees at an angle of thirty degrees. It is less dangerous to hit an object that way than in line of flight. Things happened just as I expected. The plane mowed down seven or eight six-inch pines. The motor plowed ahead of me and the trees took the shock as they broke. Just before the machine hit the ground it pivoted on a tree and cut an arc, which slowed it up more. All this happened with the suddenness and sound of a stick broken over the knee, yet I was not jolted. The pine trees fell around me without touching me. The wings and framework and running gear and propeller were shattered, but I was not scratched. I was pinned in the very heart of all this débris, without a bump, a bruise, or a broken bone. Goggles on my forehead, a mirror within an inch of my face, and the glass windshield in my lap were unbroken, though the steel braces all about them were bent and broken. The gasoline tank under me did not have a leak. The rest of the machine was good for souvenirs. It was too big a mystery for me to understand.

Yours in a horse-shoe halo.

Son.

*March 21, 1918.*

MY DEAR MRS. HAMILTON:

It was a pleasure to hear from you, for if ever letters were welcome it is here. People are so kind in writing that I really cannot pretend to answer as I should, but as you were so near my family, I hope you will forgive me if I let you learn the personal side of my experiences from them. Your letter came yesterday. The box has not yet arrived, but thank you for it in advance.

The great German offensive began last night and we wait the results of the distant thunder. Our sector is quiet. If this is not the final scene of the war, I cannot look far enough ahead to see it.

Aside from the war, I like my work. Wonderful architecture abounds. New peoples fascinate. If not a pleasure, it is a privilege to serve in this war.

As ever,  
DINSMORE ELY.

*Wednesday, April 5, 1918.*

DEAR FAMILY:

So long since I wrote, can't remember where I left off. Last ten days spent as follows:

*Mar. 25.* Over German lines.

*Mar. 26.* Ascension in United States balloon.

*Mar. 27.* Orders to leave Toul with entire escadrille.

*Mar. 28.* Packed and left Toul, arriving in Paris.

*Mar. 29.* In Paris preparing to go to Front.

*Mar. 30.* Reported to aviation center near Paris where escadrille was to receive new equipment of planes.

*Mar. 31—April 1 and 2.* Reported each day to headquarters and returned to Paris in evening.

*April 3.* Orders to the Front in new planes.

Reported to headquarters to find I was released from French Army and must go to United States headquarters. Left for Paris and there received orders to go to American Army center in France.

*April 4.* Arrived at A. A. C., was sworn in as second lieutenant.

*April 5.* Returned to Paris, ordered clothes, and now await orders to action.

With love.

Your son,  
LIEUTENANT DINSMORE ELY.

*A. E. F., 45 Ave. Montaigne, April 5, 1918.*

DEAR FAMILY:

You have probably heard more from me in the last ten days than you will in the next ten. Please pardon me for not having written. Things have moved fast, and all the world strains at attention.

What do we know of the great German offensive? The Boche has made great gains with suicide tolls as a price. The English have made splendid resistance with a retreat which will need explaining. And the turn of the battle came when the French Army arrived. It is hoped that the American Army can be of assistance in the world's greatest battle, of which the first phase has lasted twelve days already. German communics say this offensive may last for months, but it is the final of the war. The statement was made when they thought the allied line was broken. When the German people discover that the great offensive failed to gain its end, they may interpret it as defeat. If the German people cannot be made to believe that the ground gained in this offensive is of more value than a place to bury their dead, the German Government is whipped.

I went up in a balloon. Lieutenant Grant from Ohio, with whom I formed a friendship, took me up one morning from five to six-thirty. The great balloon made a curved outline against the sky above the tree tops. As we approached in the morning dusk, the darkness and the night chill still struggling to keep off the coming day, many figures hustled to muffled commands. Then, at the order, the balloon moved out into the open and upward until the men clinging to the wet side ropes formed a circle about the basket on the ground. We were put into belts and fastened to our parachutes before getting into the car. Then at the command to give way, the car left the ground and mounted upwards. Soon we were at two thousand feet, and the woods and machines and human forms were lost in the ground haze which clung in the hollows.

With all the flying in the sky which I have done, this was the first time I had hung in the air. I had never realized the air was so empty and so still. The stillness of the mountains is broken by its echo. There are splashes in the stillness of the sea, but the air doesn't even breathe. Only the desert could be so silent. My companion spoke into his telephone in low tones, to test the wires. He showed me the map, and then pointed out the direction of the enemy lines. Suddenly there was a flicker of fire in the western horizon, like fire flies in the grass. Some time after, there came the distant booms. Opposition firing started, and for a time the duel lasted. But as the sun began to rise, and the mist clear, the firing became intermittent, and finally ceased, and the appalling silence seemed to bear us skyward with its pressure. I shivered. I wonder if the soul shivers as it leaves the earth in search of peace. I think I should prefer to have my soul stay down in the warm earth with my body and the kindly reaching roots of flowers and all the ants and friendly worms than to float up in that everlasting silence. It seemed high, too—much higher than I had ever been in an aeroplane, though it was only seven hundred meters. It was a wonderful experience—but give me the aeroplane, or the submarine, and leave the balloonist to listen for the heartbeat of the Sphinx.

We had just gotten our room nicely decorated with curtains, rug, table cover, hanging lamps, and pictures when we were ordered to move; but everyone was glad of the prospect to get into the fight. We had gone on a patrol nearly to Metz that day and had tried but failed to catch two enemy planes which were located by anti-aircraft shells. That evening we ate our last meal in Toul, and the next morning were in Paris after an all-night ride.

Paris is neither excited nor exciting. Refugees were coming in and going through. Many had left the city while it was being bombarded. All my friends had gone to various country places, and I could see the streets were not so crowded.

I have been here for five days now. We came to a distributing station just outside of Paris to get new machines and then go into the Amiens sector. It took a few days for the machines to be prepared. I was to have a new Spad. On the day we expected to depart, I reported to the captain and he informed me that I was dismissed from the French Army and had a second lieutenancy in the American Army. What could have been more inopportune, just as I was going to the real Front? Well, I said good-bye to the escadrille and hurried to Paris and from there to a distant American Army center, and then back to Paris for more orders, and by that time I was officially an officer. Meanwhile, my suit was being made, and two days later, I was all dressed up in new clothes. With the assistance of a letter from one captain, I had obtained a promise from the lieutenant, the captain, major, colonel, and general of the Paris office of the Aviation Section to have me returned to the French escadrille as a detached American officer. As it was necessary to receive written orders from another distant headquarters, I have been waiting for them here in Paris. I went out yesterday to see the escadrille leave; they had been detained by bad weather.

I expect to return to the French escadrille in two or three days. After that, I shall be an American officer and probably not be able to obtain further *permissions* to Paris. At present, my one desire is to reach the defensive Front. Right now, it is hard for the French mind to grasp how much the Americans have wanted to help in this defensive during their first year of preparation. No matter how great a thing the American organization is to be, if we suppose there are 300,000 Americans actually fighting in this offensive (no one knows numbers) we must keep things in scale by remembering that Germany alone has probably had more than a million and a half put out of action in this battle alone.

*And I want to say in closing, if anything should happen to me, let's have no mourning in spirit or in dress. Like a Liberty Bond, it is an investment, not a loss, when a man dies for his country. It is an honor to a family, and is that the time for weeping? I would rather leave my family rich in pleasant memories of my life than numbed in sorrow at my death.*

Your son,  
DINSMORE.



Dinsmore Ely's grave in Des Gonard's Cemetery, at Versailles, France





*The Services at Paris*

Dr. Alice Barlow-Brown (of Winnetka) was in Paris at the time of Lieut. Ely's death, and attended the services, which were very impressive, and which indicated the appreciation of the French for the personal and national service which we as their allies are endeavoring to render to them and to the common cause.

Extracts from Dr. Brown's letter follow:

Paris, April 24, 1918.

DEAR MRS. ELY:

This afternoon I realized how very proud you should feel that you have given to the "great cause" one of the noblest and best of young men. I was more impressed of this as I walked with many others behind the hearse and saw the reverence and homage paid him by every one—men, women, and children—to "les Americains," as the cortege moved along from the chapel at the hospital to the English church—in front of which was draped the Stars and Stripes—where the services were held. The French artillery escorted from the chapel to the church, remaining outside until the services were concluded—then from the church to the gates of the cemetery.

After the detachment of French artillery came a detachment of U. S. marines, the chaplains, then the hearse, on both sides of which were members of the Aviation Corps, five of them from the LaFayette Escadrille, on each side of these were four French artillerymen, marching with their guns pointed down. Behind came the pall bearers and then representatives of the government, the prefect of the Seine et Oise, representatives of the Allied Council and French military. Then followed civilian men and women, the representatives of the Y. M. C. A. and Red Cross. The services at the church and the grave were conducted by the English chaplain and a U. S. army chaplain. The songs were "Abide with Me" and "For All the Saints Who from Their Labors Rest," also a solo.

From the church the cortege proceeded across the Place des Armes to the Ave. de Paris, for some distance. Here, while in progress, a friendly aviator descended very low and followed for a distance. In passing, every man bared his head, from the small boy of five years of age to the gray haired old man, every one standing reverently while the cortege passed. The silent tribute paid by the French was very touching.

Two striking incidents occurred. At the church when we entered was sitting a French woman in mourning, who joined us in walking to the cemetery, and said that she had a deep sympathetic feeling for the absent parents. Asked for your address to write you. She had lost two sons. The other, an old French woman of 70 years, seeing that it was an American who had given his life for France, joined the procession to pay tribute to him.

While waiting in Versailles, I spoke to Mrs. Ovington, whose son was a fellow companion of Dinsmore's. She has been the secretary of the LaFayette Escadrille for some time and looks upon all the boys as her own. As soon as she heard of the accident, she visited the hospital, where two Y. M. C. A. workers had preceded her, and found that the best surgeon and nurses were in attendance and everything was being done that was possible for the boy's comfort. He was taken to the hospital badly injured, with a fractured skull, unconscious and never regained consciousness.

The casket was covered with the Stars and Stripes, over which were many beautiful floral tributes, fully as many as if he were at home. Two very large wreaths, containing the most beautiful flowers, were given by the Aviation Corps, one for his family, the other theirs. These were fastened to the sides of the hearse as it carried the remains. After the lowering of the casket, the bugler of the U. S. marines gave the last reveille. It is difficult for me to describe in detail all that I want to, but I do so want to convey to you that if it had to be it could not have been a better testimonial of one country to another's countrymen. I was so impressed by the reverence from every one—the military, standing at attention and saluting, the civilians of every class, all in reverence, not in curiosity.

The French feel so deeply grateful to the Americans and love them all. Tears were in their eyes, for they, too, have sacrificed much.



VALHALLA  
BY DINSMORE ELY

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This poem written a few days before Lieutenant Ely's death was dedicated by him "To My Comrades of the French Escadrille, the Fighting Eagles of France; How They Fought and How They Died."

Day breaks with sun on the bosom of spring.  
Motors are humming, the pilot shall fly today.  
Mists clear and find him regarding his bird of prey.  
With crashing roar and whirr, three airmen mount the sky.

Cael, tall, and gaunt, eyes of hawk, seeing far;  
Parcontal, thrice an ace, steady aim, deadly fire;  
Devil Le Claire, quick as light, wheeling like lark at play—  
Three grow dim, turn to specks, lost in the morning sky.

Off in the distant sky white bombs of thunder burst,  
Signs that the pilot Huns pass bounds that they should fear,

Signaling avions to turn their warpath there.  
Men listen tense in groups to catch the sound of strife,  
The purr of distant guns, like rustling leaves of death.

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While minutes pass, everyone waits.

Then in their vision sweeps, curving in steep descent,  
One plane returning.  
Rushes by close o'erhead, skims like a gull to earth,  
Races back, comes to rest; those in wait run to meet.

Cael, tall and pale, unsteady of step but cool,  
Dismounts to reaching hands. Eyes of the hawk are dim.  
Helmet all wet with blood, fur coat all spotted red,  
Fall into willing hands, showing raw angry wounds  
To angry eyes that see how balls explosive, rend.  
And riddled plane reveals how near death spoke and fast.

Now Cael, in gentle hands, speaks slow to eager ears;  
Tells of the cloudy fray that only gods could see;  
How three, attacking three, put them at once to flight,  
Till four more by surprise, made odds with the Huns.  
Then, swift as hornet darts, fire-spitting eagles fought;  
Wheeling high and sweeping low, hailed lead on foe.

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"Quick as the light" Le Claire, ere seconds passed, had two,  
Falling like shrieking crows to death, three miles below.  
Parcontal, nearly caught, feigning right, wheeled to left;  
And so met another foe on him descending.  
His gun spoke balls of fire, flashing true to the mark.  
One more Hun fell in flames, leaving but smoke.  
Three were down, four remained; Cael was apart with three,  
Met and surrounded at each swoop and turn.

Le Claire and Parcontal came now like vengeance sent;  
All but too late for Cael; riddled and wounded sore, he left the  
fight.

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The tall, gaunt, frame relaxed,  
Eagle eyes saw no more.  
His comrades breathed a curse.  
"Vengeance for Cael."

Than that, more is known from the survivor,  
One Hun a prisoner in France descended.  
How for great distance combat continued  
Till the last Frenchman fell, vanquished victorious.  
Vengeance for comrades dead, dearly the Huns shall pay!  
Mead to the victors gone to drink in Valhalla.

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1. Bois de Boulogne.

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