

A Human Contribution to the Meeting of the Shillivant

Moss Society: A Letter from M. Jules Cardot.

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by John M. Holzinger.

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From the beginning of the European War the writer had daily misgivings regarding the personal safety of the prominent French Moss Student M. Jules Cardot, for twenty-one years a delightful scientific as well as personal correspondant. In the third week of August, end of the war, Charleville, his home city, was mentioned as lying in the path of the invading German hosts. Not knowing whether an American letter could reach him, I hesitated to write. But so painful became my anxiety that I finally wrote a letter on August 29th. This letter was six weeks in reaching him. And on October 13th, the day of its receipt, he replied. The following are extracts translated from M. Cardot's pathetic answer.

"I have only today received your letter of August 29th. Your expressions of friendship are most touching to me. I confess to you that, knowing you of German extraction, I asked myself if the terrible us occurrences would not put an end to forever to our longstanding and cordial relations. This war is so terrible, [the Germans are committing in our unhappy, violently invaded provinces such fearful atrocities,] that the remembrance of them can never be effaced from my mind.

"I was ten years old in 1870, and I remember that period as if it were yesterday. [My father, who was mayor of Stenay, was several times threatened with shooting by the Germans.] ... .

" Ah! my dear friend, that war was mere childs play by the side of the present one. [It seems verily that the entire German nation has been seized with a veritable frenzy, with a madness for destruction! After Louvain,--- Rheims, whose beautiful cathedral is now a mere ruin.---

Only day before yesterday a 'Taube' hurled bombs at Notre Dame in Paris. All the hospitals and ambulance quarters, marked with Red Cross banners, failed to be saved from the hostile bombs. What horror! But--- let me be silent on these unspeakable atrocities.]

"You desire news about me personally, my dear friend. I, with my wife, stayed in Charleville till August 25th. But, in the night of August 25th -26th the French military authorities-- for strategic reasons-- were compelled to require the entire civil population of Charleville, Mézières and Mohon to evacuate--- to flee from their homes, in the night !! These three cities form, as it were, one continuous city, with a total population of 40,000 souls. We were compelled to abandon immediately our homes, because a battle was threatening at this point, and the orders were to defend the passage at this narrow defile to the last extremity. It was thought that the three cities would be razed to the ground completely. We therefore departed with only a few garments, and with a small sum of money we had at home, abandoning all the rest. I fled to this place, (Dinard), where one of my friends has a little house which he has obligingly put at my disposal. I am here with my wife and daughter-in-law. My son is at the front. Dinard is a small seaport on the coast of Brittany, (far southwest from the war zone), a much frequented summer resort during the open season. At present, however, it is a vast hospital. All the grand hotels are requisitioned for hospital wards.

"I think I shall come out of this war almost ruined. For almost all my property consisted in some houses situated at Charleville. What remains to us now? Barely the life of myself and my wife. As for my collections, my library, my manuscripts, all that is now certainly destroyed. The fruit of all my labor--- my life of scientific effort--- is completely wiped out. You, my dear friend, can understand better than anyone, what a bitter grief this loss is to me.

"But, for the moment, these are entirely secondary considerations. All our efforts are strained for one end, one sacred end:- the safety of the fatherland. Later on we shall have the time to estimate our loss, and to mourn our dead. All those whom age, sex, or ill-health hinders from going to the front are determined to make themselves useful for the common weal. I am employed as director in the management of a hospital. And here is where I am writing this letter. My beloved daughter-in-law, who is a Doctor of Medicine, like my son, is occupied in the same hospital. She has a ward of 100 beds, all occupied at this moment. And her courage, her devotion, and her untiring energy win the admiration of all".

So much, it seems to the writer, is of interest to all Bryologists. A great fellow worker, a man of rare scientific, and artistic, and literary ability, and withal of unusual kindly and gentle disposition, is brought to ruin. This all through no fault whatsoever of himself add of his fellow citizens. When this bloody debacle shall subside, when the needless destructive ordeal for stricken Belgium and France is over, I stand ready to rehabilitate my friend with the half of my library and my collection,--- provided he still has the heart to make another beginning of his scientific labors. And,-- I wonder--, will other members of the Sullivant Moss Society wish an opportunity to help M. Cardot on his feet!!

[ I subjoin another extract showing the consuming patriotism of this our French fellow-worker, and of all his countrymen. He says:-

"No one in France, nor yet in England, doubts the final triumph of civilization over Prussian militarism. But, at the cost of what ruin, of what bereavements, will this victory be bought,-- this victory of right and justice over barbarism. My dear friend, I assure you with most solemn vows that not one person in France wished the war. Many of us were but too eager to lend a willing ear to pacifist

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theories. What a fearful awakening for those imprudent ones!! This War!! It was Germany that wished it; Germany sought it; Germany imposed it. Now-- with what heart do we accept it!! There are no longer any political parties, no longer any classes, no longer any social distinctions. There are only Frenchmen, indissolubly united in the savage resolution to conquer, or to die. But-- we shall conquer!

\* \* \* \* I extend to you most cordially my right hand, my dear fr  end.

Jules Cardot,

Villa la ~~Ville~~ Verlaine,  
Rue de St. Enogat,  
Dinard, (Ille-et-Vilaine). France. "



Holzinger, J. M. 1912. "Holzinger, John M. [transcript]." *Edward Blanchard Chamberlain letters to James Franklin Collins*

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