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A LETTER FROM CAPT. J. D. SPIDELL
Former Pastor of Baptist Church
FRANCE
Dec. 9, 1917.

Dear Friend:—
I am wondering what I shall write you first. There is so much I could tell you of interest but as you are fully aware we cannot write anything to our friends about our movements, all we may write is published in the papers long before our letters reach their destinations. Since writing the last time I have been changed to another post in France, not as beautiful in physical feature altho' there is much beautiful scenery around here. There are great rolling fields well cultivated and when we can get out on one of the hills we can see the ocean in a distance or, properly speaking, the English channel. This is a country of paradoxes and great contradictions. Nature so often speaks perfect harmony between herself and her God. It is difficult at times when every thing in the natural world is so peaceful, so beautiful to believe that the most horrible tragedy in all the history of the world is being enacted all about us. September was a beautiful month. It seemed as though I had never before seen such golden days and silvery nights. Perhaps it was because there is such marked contrasts between the works of man and the works of God. The former so inhuman, so cruel, the latter so loving and divine these contrasts appear mightily to the average

man. No one could make me believe that this war has a tendency to make men cruel and wicked. It is tinnal that tend to wickedness. It is hardship and ugly, nasty sights and sounds tend to make men hard, but it is not the hardness and callousness that tend to wickedness. It is rather a resignation to the inevitable. No one can make me think that war influences are going to make men more unresponsive to the appeals of God and Iniquitous. Anyone who says that the whole tendency is downward does not know the real heart life he has only judged by the surface actions and the carelessly spoken words. At heart the average man rings true to his God given nature and when approached from the right point of contact will talk earnestly and seriously and usually respond to appeals made to him. Men who never gave serious thoughts to spiritual things are doing so now and acting in accordance with such thoughts and feelings.
I have seen hundreds of men take their stand for right and God. In my own meetings scores are doing this. It may be interesting to you to know that many of the men wish to take the communion, men who have no church affiliation at home, but who love God and are trusting in Him. I am sure, it would gladden the hearts of parents if they could witness some of the work carried on here in this country by the chaplains their work cannot be fully estimated. The Y. M. C. A. is doing a good work socially

in providing writing facilities, amusements. Selling tea, coffee, cakes, etc. But it is the chaplain who gets down to the hearts of things. The spiritual work of the army rests very largely with the Chaplains and I can truly say that they are doing their work faithfully and heroically. They are doing more than is ordinary thought to help keep up the morale of the men. All lists of complaints, grievances and sorrows are brot to us and it requires a great deal of wisdom and tact to deal with cases aright. But I shall pass on to other things. You mentioned in your letters about a mother whose faith was sorely tried, because she with thousands of other mothers have been praying ever since the war began that it might cease, and God had not answered their prayers. What can one say? It is indeed difficult to know just what to say to such anxious hearts. The womenhood of our country is put to a severe test and I have a great deal of sympathy for the thousands of mothers heretof of their sons. It required a colossal faith to walk serenely these times—the best in all life is obtained thru sacrifice. This great law pervades the whole universe of God. It always did and man cannot get away from it. It is a law that obtains in the individual life and in the national life, and it is not for us to inquire why because the reasons are not to be seen now by the finite vision of man. Life is a constant expression of faith in God whether we are conscious of that faith or not. It is not for us to reason why. It is God's prerogative to hold the key to all secrets and mysteries and in the undimmed splendor of the other we shall know that which we cannot know now.

Why bright and sanguine hopes should be cruelly dashed to the ground, why dark threads should be shot thru' white raiment, why orange blossoms should be as fruit of sorrow and bells die into painful silence or drowned in bitter weeping we cannot understand. "The ways are dark and the days are dreary and the dreams of youth are but dust in age, and the heart gets hardened and the hands get weary." One thing I am positively sure of and it is that we are not going to be eternally mocked or cheated, in so far as we live true lives we are neither mocked nor cheated here. Proposing to ourselves worthy aims and attaining in a good measure to those, aims thru faith and hope the luminous azure which lured from afar shall not darken—on the contrary we shall find larger constellations and mellower skies. A life of disappointment grows in clearer vision and richer possession of that which is true, deep and abiding.

Sorrows and afflictions bring compensation. They arouse impulses and powers of whose possession we had not dreamed and open in the depths of the soul, springs of compassion before unknown. It requires trial to develop the best elements of character, for "tribulation worketh patience and patience experience and experience hope." And what is true of one is true of many.

But I have written at considerable length and you will be getting weary reading this. You see my letter is a bit piecemeal. I began it on the 9th now it is 14th. I am continually interrupted and since the election has been on I have had extra. I have been doing what I can for the Union Government and I think that in this area the vote has gone strong for conscription. It will be an eternal disgrace to Canada should the other party win. I cannot think they will, God have mercy upon us who are over here should they get into power. Well Christmas will soon be here. A little more than a week. It does not seem like Christmas over here. In fact the whole world is so bowed in grief and pain that there is scarcely a place where the spirit of Yuletide will be enjoyed as of yore. The disaster in Halifax and vicinity is so great I cannot comprehend its enormity. I am very anxious about my sister and her little family in Dartmouth. There are many anxious hearts over here. Let us hope and pray that out of all this grief, pain and death will spring a better life for all. Quite a few of my old acquaintances have passed over the great divide since I left Kentville, Judge Chipman being the last one. Murray is at the front I hope he may be spared to return to his home. I see many of our Nova Scotia boys. They are always in good heart but very anxious to get back to the land of the Maple Leaf especially to the land of the May flower.

The weather keeps quite open for this time of the year.
I am still interested in the church but get very little news as to the work

it is doing. I am very sorry to hear that Mrs. Carrol continues to remain quite ill. She must be greatly missed.

Will you not write me again some time. Yours most Sincerely,
J. D. Spidell.

Care of Canadian Genl. Base Depot.
B. E. F. France.

Billy Sunday's baseball training served him well at a public meeting in Atlantic, Co., when a big Hun sympathizer rush to the platform and understood to wallop Billy. The Hun came off with a black eye; and the people came near lynching him.

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