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A RENDEZVOUS WITH DEATH

ALAN SEEGER was a young American, who had barely passed his twenty-eighth birthday, when, on July 4th, 1916, while charging up to the German trenches on the field of Belloy-en-Santerre, his "escouade" of the Foreign Legion was caught in a deadly flurry of machine-gun fire, and he fell, with most of his comrades, on the blood-stained but reconquered soil. In the posthumous volume of his poems, just published, there is one entitled "I have a Rendezvous with Death," from which we quote the first two and the last four lines:—

I have a rendezvous with Death
At some disputed barricade,

At midnight in some flaming town,
When Spring trips north again this year,
And I to my pledged word am true,
I shall not fail that rendezvous.

This is very brave; it is also very horrible to contemplate. From one of his letters we extract the following:—"Death is nothing terrible after all. It may mean something even more wonderful than life. It cannot mean anything worse to the good soldier." This is much better, though it seems halting and uncertain and mysterious. We want more assurance, surely, when the bullet is very likely to find its billet in the breathing body, when the shrapnel may scatter to the four winds the quivering flesh. We want to be sure of something beyond the veil. Death is a misnomer.

There is no death! What seems so is transition.
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life elysian,
Whose portals we call Death.

Life is one and indivisible. It has its phases, that is all, and on the threshold of the next phase stands the White Comrade with welcoming hands. So we are constrained to print upon another page of this issue, the portrayal of a better rendezvous, a tryst with Him.

O. C. J. W.