

HEROIC FRENCH BANDSMEN LED WAY TO VICTORY AND DEATH

Camille Decreus Relates Dramatic Episode of the Fighting in France — Musicians Played "Marseillaise" During Charge Till All But One of Them Had Fallen — Composer Now in This Country Served as Volunteer Until Rheumatism Incapacitated Him

HAVING served as a volunteer in the army until incapacitation through rheumatism brought about his honorable discharge, Camille Decreus, the French composer and pianist, who two years ago made a tour of this country with Ysaye, the violinist, has just arrived in this country, and is a guest of ex-Senator William A. Clark at the latter's country place near Greenwich, Conn.

M. Decreus was a member of the same regiment as Collignon, former Prefect, General Secretary to the President of the Republic, and Councilor of the State, who at the age of fifty-eight enlisted, insisted upon remaining a private, and whose memory is now perpetuated at every rollcall of the Forty-sixth Regiment of Infantry, as is that of La Tour d'Auvergne, First Grenadier of the Republic.

M. Decreus knew Collignon, and after the latter's death, in the intervals of duty, he composed the funeral march which was a feature of the memorial service held at Fontainebleau recently. "I was at Juvisy with my friend Tourret when the war broke out, and we had been guests of Senator Clark at his château of Ivry, at Petitbougne, near by," said M. Decreus to a New York Times interviewer. "I had never been in the army. When my class was first called to the colors I was rejected because of failure to pass the physical examination. But when our country was threatened, my friend Tourret and I, unlike many French artists and musicians who flocked to this country, and who have, I fear, created an impression in America that a Frenchman following such a profession places it above patriotism and military service, felt we owed something to France, and volunteered. They rejected Tourret, but they took me.

Life in Trenches

"In two days we were at Soissons, and immediately we were sent to the trenches. That was in August. I must confess that life in the trenches was not very exciting. Most of the while in those days it was a case of making the time pass. We played cards to the accompaniment of shells screaming overhead or tearing up the earth in the trench. Whenever the explosion buried some of our soldiers we dug them out again and resumed our occupations, the effort being always to keep in good humor. We became hardened to the visits of the shells, and used to crack jokes and make wagers about where they would land. In fact, at one point we were so near the German trenches that we used to crack jokes with the Germans. A feeling of human solidarity grew up.

"One day I got lost in a 'vovau,' or communicating trench and came near not being here. I had been sent back to the third line to bring food, and the first thing I knew I found myself in the open country. Immediate shells began to burst about me. Now, when I was first drilled, I was instructed that the important thing about screening one's self was to be able to take advantage of any accidental shelter afforded by a rock. It seems incredible, but a stone six times as big as one's fist will absolutely hide your body if you lie behind it, and at 300 meters an observer cannot detect you. I threw myself flat, and began to cast about for a stone that large. It was remarkable how few rocks were on the surface at that point. Finally I discovered one and dragged myself behind it.

"I cannot tell you how long I lay there, but when I discovered I was still alive I began to drag myself away by the elbows, and finally found myself in a trench again. My comrades did not recognize me. Exhaustion and rheumatism, the latter acquired through lying there wallowing my way back in the mud, invalidated me back to the depot for a fortnight's rest.

"Then they gave me a job as distributor of munitions, food, clothing and other things meant for the men in the front line. These things were unloaded at a certain distance back. In that capacity I went to the Argonne, and was at the battle of Vauquois, at the end of February. I had come to know Collignon very well. I know that Collignon was repeatedly offered a commission, but he wanted to carry the colors of the regiment. He was a splendid figure, with his white beard, and the rosette of the Legion of Honor on his breast. He

could not wear the military shoes, and most of the time he went barefooted. Later he wore sandals. It was at Vauquois that he was killed. Our men had sought shelter in the cellars of ruined houses in the village. In a heavy rain of bullets from machine guns Collignon rushed out from such a shelter to rescue a comrade who had fallen wounded. A shell burst near him and killed him.

"He was buried at the front, and it was not until after my 'reformation,' or honorable discharge, that the memorial service took place at Fontainebleau. I had composed my 'March Funèbre' between trips from the depot to the front trenches.

A Heroic Band

"It was at Vauquois that happened an incident that I suppose stands alone in this war, the charge of a regimental band at the head of troops. Nowadays the bands are usually kept at the rear. But a critical moment came. Our men had three times attacked the Germans, and had thrice been repulsed. The Colonel felt that a time for supreme effort had arrived. He summoned the leader of the band.

"Put your men at the head of the regiment, strike up the 'Marseillaise,' and lead them to victory," he commanded.

"The bandmaster saluted. He called

his musicians, and told them what was expected. Then the forty of them took their positions. Our line re-formed. The bandmaster waves his bâton.

"Allons, enfants de la Patrie!" rang out, and the men took up the song. France was calling upon them to do or die. The band started out on the double-quick, as if on rapid parade. The Germans must have rubbed their eyes. No musician carried a weapon. But they were carrying the 'Marseillaise' against the foe. Then came the continuous rattle of the machine guns. The band marched on, their ranks thinning at every step. The leader went down. The cornetists followed him. The drummers and their instruments collapsed in the same volley. In less than five minutes every man of the forty was lying upon the ground, killed or wounded, that is, with one exception. That was a trombone player.

"His whole instrument was shot away except the mouthpiece and the slide, to which his fingers were fastened. He did not know it. He still blew, and worked the slide. It was only a ghostly 'Marseillaise' he was playing, but the spirits of his dead comrades played with him, and at the head of the regiment, and with that fragment of a trombone he led the way to victory. The trench was taken. Half of the men had died on the field of honor."

GIORDANO CALLED TO ARMY

Tenor Has Been Summoned to Join His Artillery Regiment



Salvatore Giordano, the Italian Tenor, "Snapped" in Oregon

After a successful concert tour in the West, where appearances were made in California, Oregon and Montana, Salvatore Giordano, the Italian tenor, returned to New York recently. Mr. Giordano visited many of these cities last year, when he was leading tenor of the New York Opera Company, and his re-engagement was anticipated with keen pleasure. At the close of his tour he went to Medford, Ore., where he remained with friends for some time. Here he enjoyed the out-of-door life of the West, indulging in shooting, as he is shown in the above picture.

Mr. Giordano is now negotiating with the Chicago Opera Company in regard to a contract for next season. This may be interrupted, however, as he has already been called by the Italian Government to join his regiment of artillery in Rome. He may be obliged to sail from America within the next week to present himself for service to his country.

Alois Trnka Aids Pupils of Hanna M. Bodell in Recital

Hanna M. Bodell presented her vocal class in an evening of song at the Waldorf-Astoria, New York, on June 24, assisted by Alois Trnka, the popular violinist, and Mme. Victorine Skarine, reader. Mr. Trnka revealed the musi-

cian qualities of his playing in a variety of solos and the enthusiastic applause forced him to add the Kreisler-Couperin "Chanson Louis XIII et Pavane" and the Beethoven Minuet. Much talent was revealed by various pupils. Those listed on the program were the following: Augusta Auger, Carl Peterson, Mrs. Ethel Gornston, Dorothy Winans, Carolyn Buser.

James Herbert, secretary to Otto H. Kahn, stated this week that negotiations for the disposal of the Century Opera House had not yet been concluded with Ned Wayburn, who, it had been reported, was to take a lease of the theater beginning this Summer. Mr. Herbert said that the theater was being offered to Mr. Wayburn and other parties but that no terms had been agreed upon.

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