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Christ's Cross in France

IT is one of the bewildering reversals of human plans that the very country which tried to banish the Cross from its midst, not at the instance of its devoted people, but by the impious decree of an unrepresentative Government, should in the event have become the instrument to restore that Cross to its ancient place of honor and to impress its image indelibly on the mind of the entire world. Not only has France summoned the nations who love Christian principles to resist on the soil of St. Louis the tide of oppression which threatened to sweep over the earth, not only has France inspired others with her own characteristic recklessness of the cost and her own passion to die for Christian liberty, but she has lifted, these three years and a half, the eyes and the thoughts and the hearts of many millions of men of many nations to the symbol of man's redemption and the figure of the desolate Christ dying that others might live. This fact is strikingly attested by an eye-witness in the April number of the *Atlantic Monthly*:

The war on the Western Front has been fought in a Roman Catholic country, where crucifixes are erected at all the chief cross-roads to remind us that, in every moment of doubt as to the way of life and on whichever road we finally decide to walk, whether rough or smooth, we shall need the Saviour and His redeeming love. We have seen a cross so often when on the march, or when passing down some trench, that it has become inextricably mixed up with the war. When we think of the great struggle, the vision of the cross rises before us; and when we see the cross we think of the processions of the wounded men who have been broken to save the world. Whenever we have laid a martyred soldier to rest we have placed over him, as the comment on his death, a simple white cross which bears his name. We never paint any tribute on it. None is needed, for nothing else can speak so eloquently as a cross—a white cross. White is the sacred color in the army today, and the cross is the sacred form. In after years there will never be any doubt as to where the line of liberty ran that held back the flood and force of German tyranny. From the English Channel to Switzerland it is marked for all time by the crosses of the graves of the British and the French soldiers.

Since these words were written our own brave boys have taken their place in the line and by the shedding of their blood in the cause of humanity have earned their right to be laid to rest in the same glorious line of heroes and to have their graves marked by the same sacred symbol. American soldiers no less than the British and the French are finding strength to "carry on," to the very end, in the contemplation of the supreme self-sacrifice of the God-man. They, too, like their brethren in arms are being silently taught the correct interpretation of life and the difference between the sordidness of selfish indulgence and the sublimity of self-immolation; to them no less than to others the Cross of Christ is telling its compelling lesson of nobility. Wherever they are, the crucifix rises behind their lines, meeting their eyes at dawn, soothing them at night, and guarding the heroes of No Man's Land. Doubtless they are growing familiar with it, as the British with the Cross at Neuve Chapelle:

For three years, night and day, Christ has been standing there in the midst of our soldiers, with arms outstretched in blessing. They have looked up at Him through the clear starlight of a frosty night; and they have seen His pale face by the silvery rays of the moon as she has sailed her course through the heavens. In the gloom of a stormy night they have seen the dark outline and caught a passing glimpse of Christ's effigy by the flare of the star-shells.

No doubt one of the keenest regrets of the British in abandoning Neuve Chapelle during the recent German advance was the loss of this well-loved and familiar companion of their vigils and struggles. It was not hard to stifle their groans when they looked up through the gathering mist of death at the brave Christ: with His promise of Paradise they could laugh in their hearts in spite of the anguish; it was a glorious thing to think that like Him and near Him, laying down their lives for their friends, they were going to the Lord whom they knew so well and in whose Kingdom pain and sorrow are no more. God grant that soon they may win back their Cross and that our soldiers may be with them, and learn, both at Neuve Chapelle and elsewhere, something of the Cross's mystery, its tenderness and its glory.

The Mother and the "Middy"

AMONG the communications which appeared in the last issue of AMERICA one signed by the simple initials A. C. M. should not pass unnoticed. It comes from the mother of a "middy" at Annapolis. In a few heartfelt words she earnestly pleads for greater spiritual advantages for the Catholic boys now preparing themselves for their country's service in the Naval Academy. In every word of the short letter, together with the pride which a mother feels in giving her boy to the country, we read the deep and tender concern she feels for the soul of the young "middy." Speaking for herself and for the Catholic mothers who like her have offered the best they have, their sons, to the land which in the hour of trial needs their pure and sturdy manhood, she says:

