

ROGER ALLIER

BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT

THE volume before me is a family book, not intended for publicity, written to preserve the memory of a young man, Roger Allier, a subaltern in the Chasseurs Alpains, who in the first year of this great war, with quiet heroism, laid down his life for France. The book is by his father, Raoul Allier, a professor of Protestant theology, in Paris. The family is a Protestant family—at the time of the boy's studies in the Latin Quarter there is much mention of his belonging to the Association of Protestant Students. He had all the intensity of religious belief of his Huguenot ancestors, although, of course, with a width and liberality which they were denied; and it is interesting to see how this young man, who proved himself a soldier of such gallant type, was deeply concerned, before the war, in the problems of industrial democracy, in raising the living, housing, and working conditions of the laboring man. The preface of the book is very touching. Although it is written only for the family and friends, yet it expresses a spirit of such fervent devotion to and intense pride in France as explicitly to disclaim that the gallant record of the young lieutenant stands by itself, or is more than illustrative of the many, many thousands of similar careers of the Frenchmen who have given their lives that France may live.

The great interest of the book lies in the fact that it vividly sets forth the moral preparation which made this youth and his fellows able to check the flood of German aggression in the first two months of the war. The astounding victory at the Marne,

a victory of untold consequences to civilization, was due to the moral regeneration—and the physical training necessarily accompanying this moral regeneration—which had taken place within France during the decade preceding the war. This book shows how this regeneration was accomplished. The letters of the boy, showing such keen perception of moral laws, form a document of permanent worth to all believers in the manhood which treats both valor and gentleness as essentials. Roger Allier was of the stamp of our own men, like young Shaw and young Lowell, who went into the Civil War in the highest crusading spirit. He served in the Chasseurs Alpains, a body of soldiers whose extraordinary endurance and boldness are due partly to natural aptitude and partly to a severe and prolonged training of such a character as to raise the man far above the average level—and, by the way, this intensive physical training exerts a profound effect upon the soul, upon the moral qualities, of the man who undergoes it. This book sets forth in detail the work, practical, methodical, and yet permeated throughout with a lofty idealism, which produced these incomparable soldiers. The account would have a direct technical interest for every student of military affairs in the United States who wishes to know how to train to the highest degree a select body of fighting men.

But the great interest this book holds for America is not only, and indeed not mainly, for soldiers; the lesson it teaches is a lesson for our entire citizenship. Considering the dreadful misery

and suffering that have been inflicted upon France, the book is singularly free from bitterness ; and this although it appears that the gallant young fellow was himself killed while wounded, and in an ambulance, under circumstances of shocking barbarity. It is good for us to realize the heroism that France has shown. Small nations, under exceptional circumstances, have in the past shown a like heroism extending over a long period, and great nations have shown such heroism for a short period. But I question if history shows any such drama of sustained heroism on the part of a great nation, a nation of forty millions of people, as France has shown during the last three years. Let our people profit by the example. And let them remember that this heroism is due to the moral preparation, the moral regeneration, and the accompanying physical training of the French in the six or eight years preceding the war.

The great regenerative movement was genuinely *moral* ; which means that it was the direct antithesis of the flabby and unhealthy sentimentality which travesties and degrades morality by seeking to make it a synonym of sham and cowardice and hypocrisy in such movements as those of the professional pacifists.

All true elevation of soul must be accompanied by a certain prepared readiness to use the body as an effective instrument for the expression of the soul's desires. All real morality must have in it an element of strength. Brutal and arrogant

militarism such as that of Napoleonic France and of the Prussianized Germany of the Hohenzollerns is a terrible evil. This means that moral weakness and pacifism and fear of or inability to oppose such militarism is a crime against humanity ; for the existence of soft timidity in one nation puts a premium on brutality in another. It is no accident that in the United States the professional pacifist, the anti-preparedness man or woman, is a tool and ally of German aggression against not only Belgium and France, but America. It is no accident that the professional pacifist who is actuated by weakness and timidity always finds allies in the most brutal sections of the community. The mob that committed murder and torture in the draft riots of New York in 1863 was instigated and led by men who announced that they were for "peace" and were against militarism and the draft. Many of the violent copperheads of Indiana were lawless and murderous people ; and yet their leaders all declaimed continually in favor of "peace," and used precisely the arguments of the professional pacifists of our own day. "Every old age of gold was an iron age too, and the meekest of saints may find stern work to do in the day of the Lord at hand !" The golden hopes of mankind can be realized only by men who have iron in their blood ; by men who scorn to do wrong and equally scorn to submit to wrong ; by men of gentle souls whose hearts are harder than steel in their readiness to war against brutality and evil.