

COPY.

N'Gaoundere.

June 17th 1943.

Dear Dad,

This is the first available mail since we lost our dear Gentien - 12 days ago. Last Sunday our house was struck by lightning and burnt out and so we are once more refugees staying with the kindest and sweetest family of administrators who have four little children with whom Helene plays very gaily.

Dia, of course, is overcome and she must join you all for what comfort you can give her. On the Portuguese ship coming out here the children caught whooping cough rather badly, especially Gentien. In Yaounde, during January and February, he also got some small boils in the ear - like Diana. I left Yaounde towards the end of January and the family joined me about 3 weeks later, the time the weather was wonderful and we were extraordinarily happy all together in our glorified native hut. Dia and I rode together quite a lot; the children had a donkey, we were complete with cat, dog and antelope. Gentien loved Africa, the Tirailleurs, and the local Gaulles. There are lots of European children around and he had a great time, especially once he started going to school. Of course, he was particularly bright there and could read and write fairly both in English and French, but his "forte" was arithmetic.

The Tirailleurs loved him very much and in two battalions they all called him "Corporal" because he always wore that badge. When flights of termites started he would always go and fill baskets of the insects to give to the "Foulbe" "Dames" who eat them with relish.

We had just bought him a white pony so that he could ride with Diana while I was with my Company, when, in April, he went to bed with a high temperature. It did not yield to quinine, was not malaria and for 3 weeks there was no change. The 3 doctors got anxious and spoke of Tuberculosis, then he improved under a sulfa treatment and everyone believed it was just one of those mysterious phases of acclimatization frequent out here. The boy loved lying out to look at the procession of the "Lamido" (local Sultan) go by and he recovered so completely that he went back to school for the whole month of May, played as brightly as ever and got back his lovely colour, so astounding among the children who have been out here for more than 3 years.



Then on June 2nd when I came home for a week I found him in bed with the same temperature of 39°.5 as before, but none of the weak glands trouble he had had on the first occasion. Next morning his voice had thickened so that only Dia and I could understand him and it was suspected he had an abscess at the back of the nose.

At Mid-day, on the 5th, the doctor insisted that we should be given a better house to which we went in a good closed car. The doctors tried sulfa drugs again and hoped for a fixation of an abscess. At 11 o'clock that night Gentien gave a hand each to Dia and to me and told us "going away, going away." A quarter of hour later he died completely peacefully. Dia had just gone next door to the neighbour's wife - the doctor's as it was - because the child was resting for a few moments.

He had a funeral next Day which must have been a boy's dream. Dia never saw him once he was not alive, but I, and my Tirailleur, pinned upon him his Corporal's badge and crossed his hands over the Foulbe sword, I gave him in advance of his birthday when he was ill the first time and which he loved so much. My, or rather his soldiers & black ones as well, whom he was so fond of laid him in his grave, the Lamido and his procession faithfully came, my brother Officers who all knew and liked him were naturally there. He owns a plot of this Foulbe country which is so lovely and has the view of the "N'Gaoundere" mount which means the umbilic of the world and is a landmark for fifty miles and the leaders of the rear herds of cattle which come to "good waters."

He knew about Jews, Christians and Moslems and shared your broad outlook. As he was baptised the priest read the service and according to Catholics he is an angel of God's which must be a consolation for those who have that faith. Unfortunately, Dia and I have lost all that we lived for and the loss is the greater because he was so exceptionally bright and mature - a complete companion to his Mother. Anyhow, he knew Victory is now certain and that was his only worry.

Dia wanted another child at once, but she now shares my view that the moment is scarcely opportune. We will never



have another boy quite like him, but will do our best to turn Bosmelet, or it's emplacement, into a home for Tubercular children, as they will be numerous after the war. Dia sees it that she will be continuing a fine Mond tradition and I can make no plans just now but to try and comfort her.

Tell Robert that under the boy's head I laid the standard which was given to me by the "Volontaires Grannaises" in London.

It seems absolutely certain according to all the doctors that his death had nothing to do with the climate and that it would have happened in the same way in Europe or the States and that the whole thing must be traced to the frightful dysentery - cholere he caught during the invasion when it killed off so many other children but then only weakened him.

Sad love to all and specially to you who loses your 1st grandson.

Ever Yours,

PIERRE.