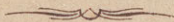


CAUTERETS

(Hautes Pyrénées)

FRANCE

May 5, 1919



Historical Sketch

Left Le Mans	5/4/19	at 9:40 a.m.
arr. Bordeaux	5/5/19	2:00 a.m.
Left "	"	3:00 "
arr. Cautelets	"	1 P.m.



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BORDEAUX

Alexandre LADAGNOUS

ARTISTIC BRONZES — JEWELRY

Perfumery of High Brands

Hair-Dressing for Ladies and Gentlemen

SOUVENIRS of PYRÉNÉES

ILLUSTRATED CARDS

—♦— CAUTERETS —♦—



General View of Cauterets



arrived in Canterets Monday May
5, 1919. at 1 P.M. Meet C. C. F.
about 3:30 P.M. on the street.
May 6, C. C. F. & I took the hike
to Lake Du Garbe. (saw (at a
distance) Vigneshale 10,820 ft.
remember the snow & not feet. ^{page 6.} the
falls. / Spent even at y.

May 7/19 went to movies in a.m.
I'm in Canterets all day. with
Bought veivis, took sulphur bath
had our picture taken & walked
about town. Rained this morning
but this afternoon has been fine.
10:45 P.M. C & I went to y. to show
pictures were the same as last eve.
so we went down stairs & watched
the dance. R.H.

May 8. Examined just as I was getting
up. We took a walk up the Mt.
on west of town. in P.M. C & I & two
other fellows climbed up to the Queen
Hortense farm on the ~~east~~ Mt.
east of town. We could see for
miles with the field glasses.
Went to the same old show after
supper.



CAUTERETS

HISTORICAL SKETCH



THE town of Cauterets in the Hautes Pyrénées qualifies as a leave centre by its situation and scenery, mild winter climate, mineral baths, excellent hotels, and nearness to Pau and Lourdes. A small, well-built, clean little hill town, it is picturesque and thoroughly French in character, with narrow streets, tiny shops, glass-roofed market, its Mairie and church of Saint Martin. Water is everywhere, natural hot water piped down from the hot springs to the public laundry, the Gave (creek) flowing under the very Place de la Mairie, drinking water deliciously pure and cold, streets bordered not by gutters but by flowing mountain streams, and two of the great mineral water establishments, famous throughout Europe, open for

sulphur baths and swimming pool to American soldiers during this winter of 1919.

Modern as the town seems there is plenty of old world peasant life close about it. The women who come in from the farms drive brown donkeys and pack mules loaded with vegetables, milk cans, or firewood; little flocks of long-legged mountain sheep and small cream-colored Pyrénées cattle appear now and then in the streets; guides and foresters in blue *chasseur* caps and red woollen girdles and uniforms covered with silver buttons, adorn the Place; and brown-eyed rosy children in black aprons clatter to school on wooden shoes. Among the surrounding hills nestle tiny farm houses, where the cooking is done at open fires, old women spin the undyed native wool, and the sheep are sheltered under the same roof with their shepherd.

Before the War 50,000 visitors were accommodated at Cauterets in the season, and the numerous first-class hotels show the high quality of the patronage. The place has been called "a bit of Paris dropped out of the clouds". Besides the medicinal baths and the excursions into the mountains on foot and on muleback, a large gambling establishment, opera, and an open-air theatre, where Bernhardt and Guitry have acted, offered amusement to the rich and idle. These summer visitors, indolent Spaniards, sporting English, extravagant Belgians, and gay Parisians, must have made a pretty scene of the Esplanade des Œufs, with its fringe of booths and its background of green mountain side, laced with paths.

Of late years winter sports have been cultivated, and parties have come up from Pau for skiing and bobsledding. Even with deep snow this sheltered valley is not bitterly cold, and nothing could be finer as winter landscape than its walls of smooth white slopes, frosted forests, and glittering white peaks against a clear blue sky. The air is usually soft and always deliciously invigorating.

The altitude of Cauterets is 3055 feet. Almost its whole horizon is made up of mountains, of varying height. Péguyères, dominating the valley vista all the way up from Pierrefitte, rising steeply over the town, and hiding the winter sun before two o'clock, is 7175 feet. The Pic des Bains on the east side is much lower. It was there that an American marine was killed by a fall, in February. The Pic de Wilson, so christened in January by M. Alphonse Meillon, is a spur of the great Monné on the west, 8935 feet high and always snow-capped. To the south the Trois Culaous, 8760 feet, rises at the head of the valley, and the northern entrance is guarded by Cabaliros, 7655 feet, on the west, and Viscos, 7025 feet, on the east. All these mountains may be climbed except when the snow is deepest, and admirably built trails make all the lower heights and slopes accessible the year round. Donkeys and mules may be hired, and guides are available to undertake the most strenuous glacier climbing. The shorter walks, affording splendid views, are those to the Plateau de Lisey, to the Col de Riou by way of the Barn of Queen Hortense, the Plateau of Cambasque and the Lac d'Ilheou, the

Cascade de Lutour, and the Raillère (glacier or slide). The excursion to Lac de Gaube, which commands a view of Vignemale (10820 feet), the highest peak on the French side of this mountain frontier, requires a whole day, as also that to the Lac d'Estom. The road to the Pont d'Espagne, or Bridge of Spain, leads some five miles up into the mountains, past the Raillère, the Cascade de Lutour, and the Cascade of Cerisey, to a beautiful old bridge, not the Spanish frontier as the name suggests, but some eight miles from it, a high pass through the barred zone of the frontier, where shivering Spanish and French guards watch from high points for deserters and smugglers. Silk, tobacco, wine and matches are the principal articles of contraband in these days, but incidents of capture and escape, of surprise attacks and successful ventures have filled the centuries since the old times, when the pasture lands of Cauterets fed one year Spanish flocks, the next year French, so uncertain were the boundaries.

At the Mairie may be seen (fee 50 centimes) a large relief map of the central Pyrénées made by the geographer Wallon. It was the work of twenty years, and gives a complete representation of this region, valleys, heights, lakes, streams, villages, and the course of the frontier. The Pyrénées are comparatively young mountains, of the tertiary period, much chiseled by the snows of centuries. Granite, marble, and slate are quarried, and the miner's eye sees old leads of silver mines worked out two thousand years ago by slave labor under the

Romans. Lead is still obtained from an old mine near Pierrefitte, where the ore is brought down on air-line cables.

The jagged granite cliffs, ravines and steep water-courses of Cauterets are perfectly characteristic of the central Pyrénées. The lower slopes are covered, not too densely, with firs, red pines, and beeches. Reckless deforestation in the 16th and 17th centuries has caused the destruction of thousands of acres of forest and pasture land by avalanches, still a great menace in this region. The timber is the property of the commune, and wood cutting is strictly supervised. The mountain meadows are covered with heather, low bushes, and rhododendrons in glorious variety.

“One look at the steep mountain sides overhanging the very roofs of Cauterets explains the refuge they provide for the many wild creatures that are found in this region. For many years the Pyrénées have been a hunting ground, but only for skilled and hardy hunters. The game found among these sharp ravines and ice-covered peaks ranges from the small migratory fowl — quail, partridge, and wild goose — to sturdy cold weather animals. The royal eagle and the petit aigle, the bald-necked and bearded vultures are caught by using a sheep carcass for bait and waiting just at dawn for the birds to appear. Not infrequently one finds hares, but because of red foxes which infest the country their number is diminishing.

“The large game naturally skirts the snow edges, the

upper forests, and the farther valleys, which are difficult of access. Of these animals the most frequently hunted and the most elusive is the izard, the small chamois of the Pyrénées. The skin is less desirable than the chamois skin of commerce, used for filtering gasoline and cleaning metal. The children of these mountain sides carry their school books or the family loaf in knapsacks made of the hide of the izard, with the hair left on. The izard is very alert, very sensitive to sound or scent, and very keen of eye. Always while a band grazes, one, a female, stands guard on a commanding rock to give the alarm that will send them leaping and darting from crag to cliff and out of reach. Hunters track them, at times a dangerous and often a disappointing task, as the slightest noise or a mere eddy of wind may send the band flying miles away, or, as they judge distances well, to an inaccessible spot tantalisingly in plain view but beyond rifle shot. At other times, guides and peasants are employed as beaters to chase the game up a certain valley within reach of ambushed hunters who have taken up their position long before dawn.

“The brown bear is becoming somewhat rare this side of the border, though it is still a menace to the flocks of sheep, grazing far up during the summer. There are still wild mountain goats with the same curled horns as our Rocky Mountain species. There is also the most interesting small wild boar (*sanglier*) to be found at long intervals. It is descended from the wild boars of the Middle Ages, hunted through the forests of France by

the nobles ("la chasse royale"). The stag, the wolf, the lynx and wildcat, which existed from immemorial times in the valley of Cauterets, as witnessed by old records of prizes and royalties, have unfortunately disappeared during the last century." (*)

The history of Cauterets must be patched together from tradition, records and guesswork. The oldest mineral springs are those of Pauze Vieux and César, and the ancient town lay around them on the eastern hillside, not in the valley, which was marshy from a widening of the Gave. During the first centuries A.D., under Roman rule, the silver mines and the curative baths must have given the place much the same character that it now has, a resort for the rich highly-civilized Gallo-Romans and Iberians. The name of Caesar has always clung to one of the springs, and may indicate a visit from some one of the emperors, if scarcely the great Julius himself.

The Moors held this whole region during the 8th century, having crossed the mountains by several passes, down through this very valley among others. As they were highly civilized their occupation probably did not damage the country in material ways. Their Arab horses were the ancestors of the much prized breed of Navarre, or Tarbes horse. The wars of Charlemagne drove the

(*) This section on the game of the region is freely transcribed from a little book on Cauterets by M. Alphonse Meillon, with his kind permission.

Moors out of France, and then came inroads of Norse pirates. That they should have penetrated so far from the sea-coast as this remote valley, where they devastated the town and laid the Roman baths in ruins, shows that tempting plunder must have existed, in the shape probably of gold and silver vessels and furnishings, and woollen, silk and linen fabrics.

After this disaster the life of the place was revived by the Benedictine monks of the monastery of Saint Savin at Pierrefitte. They received the valley in fief from their overlord the Count of Bigorre, and re-established the watercure, building a church and cabins for the sick, and constraining the peasants to keep up the buildings and supply food at fair prices to those who came to be cured. The ruins of stone baths above Pauze Vieux date from the 14th and 15th centuries. Always known as a health resort, Cauterets has probably received many more illustrious visitors than tradition mentions. Marguerite, Queen of Navarre, sister of Francis I, and grandmother of Henri IV, came here with her famous court, and on her return was delayed at Saint Savin by a flood of the Gave. She and her ladies were carried up the mountain road in chairs or litters, something like the one that is shown at the Casino des Œufs. It is pleasant to fancy this charming and witty princess, "la Marguerite des Marguerites" or Pearl of Pearls, holding her Cour d'Amour of poets, scholars and wits, amid the exquisite scenery and simple peasant life of the little town. A later queen, Hortense of Holland, daughter of the Empress

Josephine, and mother of Napoléon III, also visited Cauterets, and gave her name to a farm on the path over to Luz, where she was detained overnight by a thunderstorm, and slept, tradition says, in the hayloft over the sheep-fold.

Excursions to Luz and Pierrefitte, with their interesting old churches, are easily made from Cauterets. Lourdes, some two hours distant by train, possesses great historical and religious interest, and Pau, still further away, is the old capital of the kings of Navarre and a well-known winter resort.

May 9th We went to Lourdes
left at 7.55^{a.m.} got back at 6.15^{p.m.}
Remember the steak at dinner

May 10th C & I took the auto
ride to Gavarnie
went to show & watched
the fair well dance in
the evening.



May 11th Mother's day. Had
free lunch at Y. bought candy
I wrote to Mother. Spent P.M.
with E. up on the side of Mt.
east of Cauterets. after supper
we attended service at the
Y. & had lunch after.

Monday May 12th. I came
to my room about 9:30. we
went to Y. for breakfast then
took hot sulphur bath. Had
dinner 11:45 a.m. I went to
depot. trolley left Caen at
at 2:30 P.M. The weather is
just like summer. Had to
wait in Pierrefitte from 3:30
till 8 P.M.  changed trains
2:10 a.m. left. 2:30  laid over at
Chateau Du Loir from 2 P.M.
till 4:25 P.M. arr. in Le Mans
at 6:30 P.M. May 13/1919

