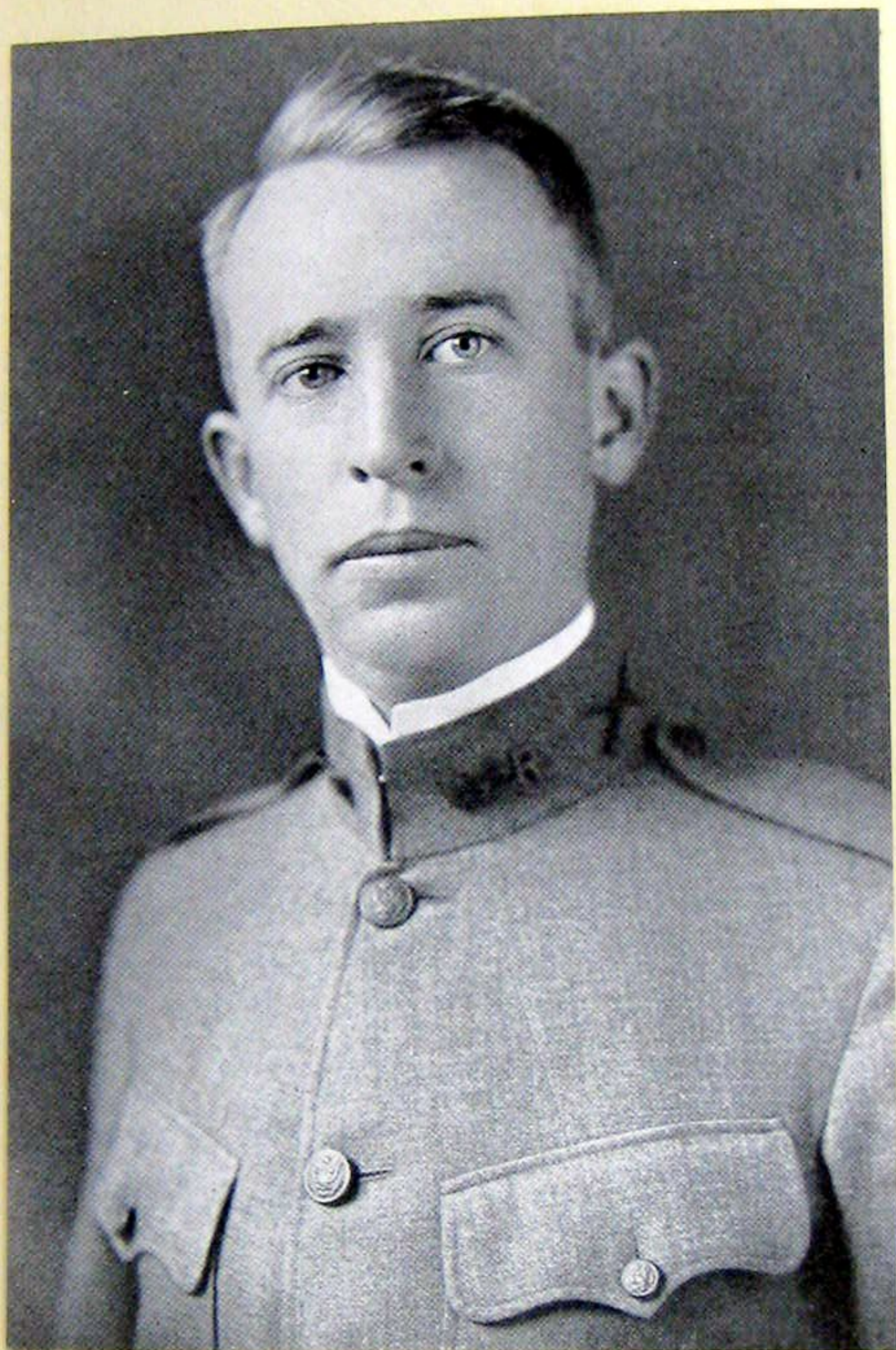


In Memoriam:

LAURENCE SOULÉ LYNCH



In Memoriam:

LAURENCE SOULÉ LYNCH

First Lieutenant "G" Company

362nd Infantry, 91st Division, United States Army

Born in San Francisco, June 9, 1888

Died in France, October 8, 1918



PRIVATELY PRINTED BY
JOHN HENRY NASH, SAN FRANCISCO

1919

Reprinted from the COAST BANKER of January, 1919

SOLDIERS OF FREEDOM

THEY VEILED THEIR SOULS WITH LAUGHTER
AND MANY A MOCKING POSE,
THESE LADS WHO FOLLOW AFTER
WHEREVER FREEDOM GOES;
THESE LADS WE USED TO CENSURE
FOR LEVITY AND EASE,
ON FREEDOM'S HIGH ADVENTURE
GO SHINING OVERSEAS.

OUR SPRINGING TEARS ADORE THEM,
THESE BOYS AT SCHOOL AND PLAY,
FAIR-FORTUNED YEARS BEFORE THEM,
ALAS! BUT YESTERDAY;
DIVINE WITH SUDDEN SPLENDOR —
OH, HOW OUR EYES WERE BLIND! —
IN CARELESS SELF-SURRENDER
THEY BATTLE FOR MANKIND.

SOLDIERS OF FREEDOM! GLEAMING
AND GOLDEN, THEY DEPART,
TRANSFIGURED BY THE DREAMING
OF BOYHOOD'S HIDDEN HEART.
HER LOVERS THEY CONFESS THEM
AND, RUSHING ON HER FOES,
TOSS HER THEIR YOUTH — GOD BLESS THEM! —
AS LIGHTLY AS A ROSE.

— KATHERINE LEE BATES.



LAURENCE SOULÉ LYNCH

LIEUTENANT LYNCH was born in San Francisco, but his parents moved to Alameda while he was a small child, so in that city he received his schooling. He was graduated from the high school, and matriculated in the University of California with the class of 1910, where he became a member of the Chi Phi fraternity, and demonstrated his talent for making friends, a faculty which never forsook him.

A considerable part of his boyhood was spent in the country, as were nearly all his vacations, so that he learned to ride and acquired as well the things which only the out-of-doors can teach. The Alameda shore made him a good swimmer and diver, and he was equally at home in a boat or a motor car. He had a taste for athletics, and came out of the university well developed up to his seventy-four inches of height.

At the end of the first half of the junior year, he left college and went to work with E. H. Rollins and Sons, Investment Bankers, in whose service he remained until war was declared against the German Empire.

LAURENCE SOULÉ LYNCH

While with Rollins and Sons, he went through the usual office training ; then travelled the southern and central parts of California as salesman. Later he was made City Salesman, and, for some years, called regularly on the San Francisco banks, thus making a wide acquaintance among the California bankers.

Always he was distinguished by a quickness of mind and an intuitive perception of the essential core of things, while a keen sense of humor, and a gift for the unexpected, helped to smooth for him the rough edges of life.

On April 23rd, 1913, he was married to Constance Van Brunt, and a son, Ransom Van Brunt Lynch, now three years past, was born to them.

So far, he was just an average young man who took life easily and happily, giving not too much thought to the morrow.

Then the war broke out in 1914.

The horror of that crime against humanity sank deeply into his soul, and, as the obscene Boche poured into Belgium and France, leaving a trail of murder and ruin behind them, the iron in his character chrysalized into a stern determination to do his part toward putting them down.

He was keenly aware of the defenseless position of his own Country, and humiliated by the indifference of so many of his countrymen. When that singular rabble of Germans and pro-Germans, pacifists and professors, editors and anarchists, began the campaign to turn the

LAURENCE SOULÉ LYNCH

United States, bound hand and foot, over to the Huns, he entered the training camp which was held in July, 1916, at Monterey. He came out a firm believer in universal military training as a character builder, as well as a necessity to the continued existence of a democracy.

By April, 1917, events had so developed that the United States was compelled to enter the war as a matter of self-defense, and his decision was made at once. While the majority of Americans believed that our mere declaration of war would convince the Huns of the hopelessness of victory and lead them to patch up a truce, he thought and said that many of her young men must be sacrificed before the world could have real peace.

The following quotation from a letter written to his wife by Colonel Benjamin H. Dibblee, who was manager of the Rollins office, well states his position:

Of all the men I knew who have entered the Service, I believe he was quicker to make the great decision, and that he saw his duty more clearly from the outset than any other. With him there was absolutely no hesitation.

I remember only too well the first and only talk I had with Laurence about entering the Service. At the time when others were hesitating and wondering whether we would enter the first Training Camp or wait, he came into my office one day and said he wanted to go. . . . I said I did not think married men were needed then, but he replied that he felt every able-bodied man of his age was needed and that he would never be satisfied to live if he did not go — that he would rather be killed than live the rest of his life feeling he had not done what he

LAURENCE SOULÉ LYNCH

considered his duty. His attitude was so clear, positive, and brave, that he was an inspiration to me. That talk and his noble death will forever place him at the top of my personal honor-roll.

It is to him who takes the lead and gives his life by so doing that the greatest honor is due, and your husband did take the lead—God bless him.

He was admitted to the first Officers' Training Camp at the Presidio of San Francisco, and took up the hard work and concentrated study with all his energy. In spite of the years which had elapsed since he left the university, he greatly enjoyed the training, and received, at the end of the course, a commission as Second Lieutenant. He had chosen the Infantry, because "The Infantry is the Army." He put aside all suggestions as to staff positions, or to non-combatant lines, as beneath the notice of a man who was young enough and strong enough to fight.

In August, 1917, he was ordered to Camp Lewis where, with Elam, Robinson, Waybur, Bradbury, Spalding, Evans, Baker, and other gallant boys from around the Bay, the work of training the new Army was begun. There were plenty of officers at first, but no non-coms., and the Lieutenants took up the squad drill. This task brought him close to the enlisted men, and he learned the great lesson that what men want is not special favors so much as fair and impartial treatment and the knowledge that the officers are looking out for them. That he made this lesson practical is evidenced by the following extract from a letter to his mother:

LAURENCE SOULÉ LYNCH

I work my men hard—perhaps harder than most of the others—but I give them definite rests and let them know how long the rest will be. When I have a lecture scheduled to give them, I find a good place under a tree to sit down. When it is time to go in, I work down toward the edge of the parade grounds, so my squad is nearly always first back to the barracks. Thus they get first at the washhouse, and, therefore, first in line to mess. I make them get out on the dot, and we are generally started before the others. After a time, men see that they are being looked after—not that they have an easier time, but that their comfort is first in their officers' command.

During the ten months spent in Camp Lewis, he helped drill practically three companies, for twice the best part of "G" Company was drafted into other units.

Toward the end of 1917, he took a detachment of casualties to Washington, and, on his return, received his commission as First Lieutenant, for which he had been recommended originally at the training camp.

For some months, as ranking First Lieutenant, he commanded the Company (the Captain being on detached service). He was still in command when his men (about one-third of whom were then raw recruits) entrained for service abroad, and he maintained command until ordered to the front for action.

On June 24th, 1918, his Company left Camp Lewis, and the long trip—across the continent, over the ocean, through England to France—was accomplished without misadventure. "G" Company was billeted at Boncourt, in the Haute Marne, and settled down to intensive training. The life of the little commune, its inhabitants (tillers of the soil) who went far afield to

LAURENCE SOULÉ LYNCH

their work; the intimate personal relations between the peasants and the cows; the good man who came home *en permission* to harvest the wheat and went back to the trenches for a rest; the old grandmother who thought him a "scream" and cackled shrilly over his French; the mother of the family who mended his clothes and wished to shine his shoes; the children, particularly the little girls—all were sources of joy to him.

A little over six weeks closed this stage (during which he wrote: "This is a very pleasant war"). On September 15th, the Division started for the front. Letters had to be very carefully worded to meet the requirements of the Board of Censors, and there is much that cannot now be known, but the following incidents serve to bring him up to the line of battle:

Sept. 15: We moved out and came north through some beautiful parts of France. I had a seat on a Packard truck. At our destination (no lights being permitted as we were nearer the front), I was given a dossier, a truck, and a map, and told to go to a nearby town and billet my regiment. Arrived at 11 p. m., woke the maire; billeted the men, the regiment arriving at 6 p. m. next day. On our next march, we started at nine at night and arrived at a wood near V—— about 3 a. m., having gone 14 kilometers. George Wong Sing, my striker, gave out, and I carried his pack in addition to my small pack, so was tired. We had 100% record for no fall-outs, which no other Company had. . . . We learned we were in reserve for a large offensive. The men were pleased at the thought of getting into it, and did not mind the incessant rain and fast accumulating mud. . . . We heard guns till the infantry got so well advanced firing had to stop. Airplanes by the hundred. Shrapnel shooting at them beyond the hills. . . . We left

LAURENCE SOULÉ LYNCH

the wood to ambush, supposedly to go into the line. An orderly came for me—I was made billeting officer, and as such arrived alone at next stop, about midnight, woke the French Major de Cantonment there, told him I would be back; went on to town beyond, woke some officials there, and, without an interpreter, arranged for billeting our 3rd Battalion, my own regiment, and one M. G. Battalion. Learned that large offensive was so successful reserves were not needed. . . . We are again in reserve in a different part of the line. Tomorrow I billet 200 horses and arrange baths for some 900 men. This is a great war so far. I enjoy it very much.*

Sept. 21: Regiment left one night at dark and went 18 miles before dawn—a terrible hike; many men fell out. . . . I finished the paper work for billeting, had the salvage assembled and listed, and that night late got one of a three-truck train out to join the regiment. Truck drivers are always nearly dead for lack of sleep, so mine, who had no assistant, was glad to have me drive for him. It was a very interesting night. Lots of traffic—men heavily laden, marching slowly and sitting down in place when they halted. Lots of motor traffic—long wagon trains. Many small French towns where the turnings might be missed. I turned in my billet and salvage papers at 3 a. m., had my first meal in 24 hours, and slept on the floor of a house deserted since 1914. After a day in that town, we left and had an easy walk to a bois; the next night, an easy walk to the wood where we now are—my Battalion about 600 or 800 yards behind the lines, with the first Battalion up. We are well in artillery range, but are quite safe, as the Boche does not know of our presence, due to much moving at night. This morning we had a warm breakfast cooked before dawn, by a camouflaged fire, and each day while we are here we shall have one warm meal. This is a quiet sector—now.

Sept. 24: The big show begins tomorrow. I would not miss it for worlds.

* This evidently refers to the St. Mihiel drive.

LAURENCE SOULÉ LYNCH

The 91st Division, young, strong, full of determination, was one of those selected to clean the Huns out of the region known as the Argonne Forest, where, after three years of occupancy, they had settled down to a comfortable existence. Well-built shacks, poultry yards, vegetable gardens, concrete-lined trenches, all indicated that they felt at home. Machine guns cleverly concealed, sniper-stations in the trees, hidden artillery, made the country almost impregnable; yet the Commanding General said of the 91st: "At a time when the divisions on its flanks were faltering and even falling back, the 91st Division pushed ahead and steadfastly clung to every yard gained."

The losses were necessarily heavy—sixty-five per cent casualties is the general estimate of those officers who have written home. The loss among the officers was even greater.

The Argonne-Meuse offensive was launched at one o'clock in the morning of September 26th, by preliminary artillery preparation, the Infantry going over at 5:30—just at daybreak. The 91st was a front-line combat division. It advanced that day about nine or ten kilometers, to a ridge near the villages of Eclisfontaine and Epinonville. Evening of the 26th found "G" Company in a defensive line formed by its Regiment against counter attack, where it lay all night in a pouring rain. At dawn of the 27th, it plunged into the Hun-infested woods near Epinonville. Later in the day, while leading his platoon through an orchard, Lieutenant Lynch

met severe opposition from machine-gun fire, and sent back for a one-pounder to silence the nests, before exposing his men. He stood for a few moments looking through his field-glasses toward the concealing thickets on the other side, when he was shot high in the right breast by a bullet from a sniper's rifle.

He was carried out of the wood by his men, after first aid had been administered, for which he himself directed the arrangements. Although the wound was serious, his recovery was at first thought probable. He was moved to the evacuation hospital at Froidos, where, in spite of surgical skill, he died on October 8th. He is buried in the cemetery there, on a little hill overlooking the Argonne.

The following expressions are from letters written by his brother officers:

It is a terrible thing that such a sterling man should have to be sacrificed, but you can always be proud of the memory of a man who followed his conscience and did not take the easy path which was opened to him.

I was not far from him at the time he was hit, and I assure you his name will always remain in the memories of his comrades as a daring, conscientious leader, paying the supreme sacrifice rather than taking a course which could have been easily pursued without criticism, but which would not have satisfied his conscience.

.

He fought well and bravely in the face of as bitter an enemy as ever men faced, and his men loved him and followed him.

.

His spirit was the type of America's best response to the great task she faced, and I shall always be glad and proud to have known him—

LAURENCE SOULÉ LYNCH

not only for his fine loyalty, but for his eager and responsive personality. He felt the call of his Country keenly and obeyed it splendidly.

A Canadian Baptist clergyman who declined a chaplaincy to carry a rifle with his men, was being commiserated on the loss of a leg. "I did not lose the leg," he said; "I traded it for a clear conscience."

Laurence Soulé Lynch gave his life for a clear conscience. He went to his end with a light heart and a joyous spirit, a "gentleman unafraid."



