

Love between noble people can move mountains

By JOHN SOMMER
Herald Special

"We must not descend into bitter personal attacks. We must look higher. I will repeat again today what I have said from the first day: above all human passions, above all human error, there is the Fatherland...and it will be my supreme judge."

"I am strong, my dear Alfred, so have no fear; when you feel most discouraged, most sad, tell me all your thoughts, and describe all the bitterness in your heart."

"My thoughts never leave you for an instant...and if I listened only to my heart, I would write you every moment of every hour."

"Sometimes I have such a need to confide in you, to tell you my hopes, to lean on you, that I embrace your photograph. I hold it with all my strength. I speak to it and I want to bring it to life."

This loving dialogue between two people becomes extraordinary once you know that the man who wrote these sentences to his wife was innocently imprisoned in a cruel dungeon in the tropics, and that the woman, who answers him, had to keep out of the public eye with her children for years, because she was sur-

rounded by hatred. The Dreyfus Affair, that divided the French people for the best part of 12 years, was a rehearsal for what happened 40 years later in Germany.

Anti-Semitism has been Christianity's ever-present shadow, and when Captain Alfred Dreyfus of the French Army's General Staff, was accused of high treason and arrested on October 15, 1894, the headline in the newspaper *La Libre Parole*, "Arrest of a Jewish Officer", opened the floodgates to a virulent anti-semitic campaign that shook France to her very foundations. With the army refusing to divulge any information, the newspapers condemned the "Judas Dreyfus" before any trial had taken place.

The outcome of the court-martial on December 19, was predictable. The military court unanimously condemned Alfred Dreyfus to the punishment of deportation and to military degradation. "Jews out of France", bellowed the journalist Drumont on the day of Dreyfus's conviction in *La Libre Parole*, and the newspaper *Soleil* wrote "Dreyfus is a man without a country, a man of a special race: this is not a Frenchman." Other



Ideas and The Arts

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newspapers and the public followed these examples.

Alfred Dreyfus was deported to Devil's Island in French Guyana, where he remained for four years, part of that time confined to his cell and locked into double shackles at night.

During the long years of imprisonment, he staunchly proclaimed his innocence, and at the same time, never wavered in patriotism and love for France.

His wife Lucie and the Dreyfus family rose to the ordeal admirably. The family's considerable wealth was employed by his devoted brother Mathieu to unearth the plot behind his brother's misfortune, and to press for a re-trial. But before this day could arrive the country went through turmoil.

The real traitor, Count Walsin-Esterhazy, was found, but whitewashed by the deeply embroiled army. Outraged by the army's machinations, the great writer Emile Zola accused the highest army brass "of having certain proof of Dreyfus's innocence and of having suppressed it."

"The country divided into two camps, the Dreyfusards and the anti-Dreyfusards, and the war of words gave birth to a devilish vocabulary, from "Jewish vermin" to "the needed extermination of the Jews."

On July 1, 1889, Alfred Dreyfus returned to France for his second court martial. Again the army closed ranks and the military judges found him guilty of the

crime of high treason for a second time.

His enemies were jubilant, but Mathieu Dreyfus, knowing that his sick brother would not survive any more years in prison, obtained a letter of pardon from President Loubet. It took almost another seven years before Captain Alfred Dreyfus was finally fully rehabilitated by the judges of the High Court of Appeal, on July 11, 1906.

This is the skeleton only of a brutal and absorbing story. If you are interested in all the details of the convoluted tale, I suggest that you read "Dreyfus" by Michael Burns, published by Harper Collins in 1991.

You might think this a too sombre story for Valentine's Day, but to me it is proof, that the love between noble people can move mountains and will prevail against all the evil of man.

Artisans workshop

The Credit Valley Artisans are offering a one day moccasin workshop on Saturday February 15th from 9 am to 4 pm. Georgetown resident Cathie Marcoux will be the instructor. Eleven years ago, Cathie learnt the methods of Indian moccasin construction and decorative beading while living in northern Saskatchewan. Cathie is a member of the Stained Glass Crafters and CVA Potters and Sculptors, both guilds of the Credit Valley Artisans.

During the workshop, the student will hand sew a pair of moc-

casins. The student will be given the choice of making the traditional moccasin or the modern moccasin, which is similar to a dance slipper. Some basic beading techniques for embellishing the moccasins will also be demonstrated.

This workshop will be held at Cedarvale Cottage in Cedarvale Park, Georgetown. For further information contact Frank Anthony, Registrar, at 877-5856 between 6 pm and 8 pm. Deadline for registration in this course is Thursday February 6th, 1991.

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