

**Martel's *La France ignorée*:
New Information from Two Post Cards to his Publisher**

by

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Two post cards, written in 1927 by the famous French speleologist Martel, were recently discovered in Paris where they were bought by the author for 1 F. 50 each in one of the book stalls on the left bank of the Seine.

Edouard Alfred Martel (1859-1938) had already published some 16 books and more than 780 articles by 1927 and in that year he was preparing his lengthy work *La France ignorée*. This was a speleological survey of the various regions of France, amounting to 600 printed pages and published in two volumes in 1928 and 1930**. These post cards, evidently written to his publisher, throw some light on his progress with the manuscript and in particular they establish a date when the first part of the work had been completed.

Both the messages were written on picture post cards showing the Gouffre de Padirac, the great open shaft and river cave which Martel had explored at the turn of the century and which he had subsequently opened to the public by the Société Anonyme de Puits de Padirac. The French texts of both cards are reproduced here in facsimile and, his hurried writing being not easy to read, transcriptions are given in the appendix. Translated into English, they read as follows:

24 March [19]27

Dear Sir,

Can you make me an appointment for the afternoon of Thursday 31 March or Friday 1 April, at a time convenient to yourself.

I would bring you the manuscript (a typed copy) of the first half of my work so that we could talk more profitably.

Yours very sincerely,
E. A. Martel

* 11, Bewley Lane, Lacock, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 2PG, England.

** Given erroneously as 1930 and 1933 by Chabert and Courval (1971).

and

Rocamadour
Hotel des Voyageurs
2 July [19]27

Dear Sir,

Here are galley [proofs] 16, 17, 18 and 19 for page setting. From the time this reaches you and until further notice please address anything you have for me to the Hotel des Voyageurs,

L. e. Rozier
Lozère

It is raining!!

Yours very truly

E. A. Martel

It will be seen that neither the name of the addressee nor the title of the book concerned is explicitly stated. However, *La France ignorée* (1928, 1930) was the only substantial work of Martel to be published about this time. All the various articles issued in 1927 and 1928 are short (not more than 16 pages) and even the booklet *L'Aven Armand* (Martel, 1927) was of only 48 small pages. None of these items was large enough to have justified the separate delivery of "the first half of my work", whereas *La France ignorée* was indeed published in two halves with two years between them. Moreover, of the works that could have been in preparation at the time, only *La France ignorée* was long enough to have galleys numbered up to 19.

Neither card bears any stamp or postmark and they must have been posted in envelopes carrying the address, which were subsequently destroyed. It is clear from the content, though, that they were written to his publisher. The publisher of *La France ignorée* was in fact the Librairie Delagrave, who had already produced several of Martel's books, including *Les Abîmes* and *Irlande et cavernes anglaises*.

In summary, these two post cards provide evidence that:

- a. all or part of the manuscript of *La France ignorée* vol. I was complete before the end of March 1927.
- b. by early July the printing of the book was well in hand, with 19 galley proofs (equivalent perhaps to some 70 pages) already through the author's hands.

APPENDIX

THE ORIGINAL FRENCH TEXT OF THE POST CARDS

le 24 mars 27

Cher Monsieur,

Pouvez-vous me donner rendez-vous pour le jeudi 31 mars ou le vendredi 1er avril, dans l'après-midi, à l'heure de votre choix.

Je vous porterais le manuscrit (tapé-copié) de la première moitié de mon travail, ce qui nous permettrait de causer plus utilement.

Bien cordialement à vous,

E. A. Martel

Rocamadour
Hotel des Voyageurs
2.7.27

Cher Monsieur,

Voici pour la mise en pages des placards 16 - 17 - 18 -, 19. A partir de reception de la présente — et jusqu'à nouvel avis, voulez vous bien me faire les envois à:

l'Hotel des Voyageurs
Le Rozier
Lozère

Il pleut!!

Tout à vous,

E. A. Martel

Envoi de
E. A. MARIEL le 24 mars 97
 23, Rue d'Amale, 23
 PARIS. IX^e
 Répondu le 28 Mars 97

Cher Monsieur,
 J'aurais- vous me donner
 rendez- vous pour le
 jeudi 31 mars ou le
 vendredi 1^{er} avril, dans
 l'après- midi, à l'heure
 de votre choix.

Extrait de la Bibliothèque Bandel, St-Louis (Mo) - Claude A. Mariel

Je vous porterai le
 manuscrit tapé-copie
 de la première partie
 de mon travail, ce
 qui vous permettrait
 de causer plus utilement
 Bon cordialement,
 E. A. Mariel

CARTÉ POSTALE

Rocamadour. Hotel
 de Voyageurs. 2. 7. 27
 Cher Monsieur,

Vici pour la mise
 en pages de placards
 16 - 17 - 18 - 19.
 A partir de réception

de la présente - et puis.
 Je vous envoie un
 très bon meurtre
 de couris à:

l'Hotel de Voyageurs
 Le Rozier

Il pleut!!
 Je vous envoie
 à M. Martel

CARTE POSTALE

Édition de la Librairie Vierge, Saint-Germain, Paris

SUMMARY

Two recently discovered post cards written by Martel to his publisher provide new information on the date he completed the manuscript of the first volume of *La France ignorée* and on the progress of its printing.

RÉSUMÉ

Deux cartes postales écrites par Martel à son éditeur ont été découvertes récemment: elles apportent une information nouvelle sur la date à laquelle Martel acheva le manuscrit du premier volume de *La France ignorée* et sur la progression de l'impression.

REFERENCES

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