

A Message from France.

Somewhere in France,
November 6th, 1918.

Dear old "Red and White."

To show that an old friend has not forgotten you, I have attempted to write a short article that I hope you may find eligible for a space in your pages.

It is true we, over here have not much spare time for keeping up the standard in all that our dear old Alma Mater has taught us, still I feel you will overlook any grave errors I may have made in my necessary haste and do not class me as a cast-away from your pages.

Since coming away I have never missed one of your numbers, through the thoughtfulness of your officials, and I can assure you there is nothing more welcome. Always much interested in the life existing inside those dear old walls and revisiting once more old friends, old places, old desks, benches and books, we must therefore enjoy and welcome the means that will bring us back again to those good old days.

Wishing you, dear old "Red and White" a very Merry Xmas, and a happy and prosperous New Year.

I am,

With greatest respect

CORP. P. A. McLELLAN.

("Red and White" is pleased to hear from its ever kind friend Corp. P. A. McLellan who was a student of our college previous to his enlisting some two years ago. We take great pleasure in publishing his grateful letter and much appreciated article.)

"BEHIND THE LINES"

As one travels behind the lines, that is, over the space from the rear of the battle area to the front line trenches, whether he be the curious newspaper reporter, with soldier's tin hat and respirator, or the amateur soldier just called up with his very many accoutrements strapped upon him, he will naturally form in his own mind a picture of what the battle area is like. In his own imagination, as a civilian of course, (because a poor soldier is never supposed or expected to possess such an impediment) he fancies before him destruction everywhere. Old battered remnants of once happy homes, where children were wont to play, is all, he thinks, that is now left to mark the path of the German war lord. He pictures guns, horses, gunners, drivers, and infantry with their machines guns, and everything else required in modern war, in one great conglomerate mass engaged in a titanic struggle with a titanic enemy. He wonders how near he might approach such a scene with safety. However nearer and nearer to the reality he moves; he hears a deafening roar somewhere in the vicinity and he instinctively digs his fingers into his ears and ducks his head. He discovers there is no danger as it is only one of our "heavies" releasing its burden of cast-iron to be carried Fritz-wards on the wings of a powerful charge of "cordite". He feels he is getting near to the battle zone and draws his "Lizzie" as the steel helmet is sometimes affectionately termed, over his ears in case a stray shrapnel bullet may carry it away. He asks his guide a few anxious questions, who answers as anxiously and reminds him to be prepared when they reach the "Alert Zone."

Still nearer and nearer he draws and soon he sees in reality some of the strange pictures he had allowed his imagination to paint. He sees the remains of houses, their roofs completely swept away. He sees shell-craters all about him now partially camouflaged with grass. He sees also the ruined happy home of the young "Agriculteur." Here now lies the shattered hopes of a bright future "pour les enfants" lying under a heap of debris. There remains around the buildings

an occasional tree-stump with a small piece of bark clinging and, as if consoling its owner's sorrow its roots shoot an additional supply of sympathetic tears to one or two little twigs that still defy the enemy of humanity, yes, the enemy of nature itself.

Farther on he sees the ruins of what was once a beautiful chateau, the pride and admiration of the commune. Its owner had lavished upon it all his talent because of his love for home and family like the lark who after completing its nest makes it soft and warm by plucking the down from its bosom. He loved it, as an artist loves his canvas, as Bellini loved the missal he had illuminated, as the architect loves the chapel upon whose delicate capitals he has lavished his very soul. Its curved roofs and iridescent glass windows, its massive chalk pillars and cypress-finished walls are now a sore spectacle to the curious visitor, a heart-breaking acknowledgment to the owner that irrespective of persons or property the war-god must have his harvest.

The curved road shaded by two rows of noble elms, the beautiful orchard with its stately walnut and delicate pear-trees; the garden walls where the vines grew purple in the sun, and the fountain with its ceaseless spray of diamond showers refreshing the flower-bed encircling it are now as a grim skeleton which holds the spectator spell-bound. He feels a choking sensation in his throat, anger rising in his heart and he passes on with slow oppressed movement.

He then reaches the town, where in days gone by the peace-loving peasants assembled to dispose of their land products in exchange for their simple daily necessities. Here now is desolation heaped upon ruins. The once beautiful streets are now a menace to traffic, blocked by the occasional overtoppling of houses, or made dangerous by the frequent falling of stone or brick caused by the exploding of shells sent on their mission of destruction by a barbarous foe. The factories are now a heap of twisted iron and ashes. "Estaminets" that used to resound with the laughter and happiness of a group of young men as they chatted and sang over their "biere" and "vin rouge," now present a cold welcome to their guests—windows

boarded, doors perforated with shrapnel, the roofs, if any remain, are shattered and torn. Our visitor wonders what sort of fiend was let loose upon this peace-loving people. Did they ask for this scourge? No. Unprepared for an attack, no plan of hate in their hearts, their peasants, their merchants and bankers, their poets and philosophers, were startled from their peaceful industries by the sound of cannon, thundering in the distance which foretold many that their own peace-loving country, "La Belle France," was about to be crushed to earth by a demon, the greed and pride of whom even surpassed that of the Duke of Alva. They realized that their beloved country was about to set out upon a "Via Dolorosa" which may be likened to the two miles of stones reddened by our Blessed Saviour's blood on the road to Calvary.

Next he comes to the town Cathedral. Ah! Here is where he stands spell-bound. This sacred building, this monument to the ardent faith of its innocent people, this Sanctuary where our Blessed Saviour daily communicated himself to his loving and beloved creatures—this temple of God where the prayers of His children were offered to Him day by day in praise of His Holy Name and thanksgiving for his benefits. Is it destroyed? Too true! Its sacred walls are pierced by the terrific force of enemy projectiles. Its massive architectural master-pieces are cut off like the golden harvest after the reaper.

Second to Parthenon it stood in the estimation of the town's culture. What majesty and dignity in its lines! With what splendour and gracefulness did its arches leap into the air! Now the enemy shells have torn great holes in the roof, have shattered its stately pillars, have destroyed its magnificent paintings and carvings. Inside, near the place where once the Holy of Holies was kept, is a statue of bronze, the image of the Blessed Mother with a child in her arms. Scarred by German bullets, blackened by the German fire, but unshaken in its foundation still stands this statue of the Comfortress of the afflicted, the Mirror of Justice. The visitor gazes upon it and wonders. By what miracle was it preserved? Was it that the enemy did

not wish to destroy it? Impossible. Was it that it had been removed and brought back again. Impossible also. So he passes on, still retaining this seemingly miraculous event for his private meditation.

Presently he sees a sign-board by the shell torn roadside announcing the "Alert Zone." Soon he discovers himself among a deafening succession of roars. One quite near, and then a weird, whistling sound of something passing swiftly near his head, and again he instinctively drops on his knees. His eyes follow the sound, and in the distance he sees a great upheaval of earth and smoke. One of our "heavies" is in action. One of our "hell-spitters" is giving the enemy a taste of British steel and H.E. He soon hears a succession of sounds which interlock with each other into a sort of pulsating chain, and he is forced to realize that here in this place is the backbone of the army—that army that stretches for one hundred and fifty miles, staying the onrush of the enemy with the iron heel, who is doing his utmost to dominate the world. Soon, unexpectedly, a howitzer quite near him, but completely concealed from view, releases its message of death, and the suck and thrust of the air pulsation caused by the flying missile almost lifts him from the ground.

The picture he had painted coming up the line has now completely faded, and he sees no guns, no infantry, no enemy, still he realizes he is in the fighting area, watching the daily progress of the war. He feels, all about him, the presence of the guns, though completely concealed from aeroplane photography. He is told that farther on is the lighter artillery, and in front of all are our boys, the infantry—college lads and counter clerks, farmers' sons who not so long ago were bare-foot boys, facing man for man, and very often outnumbered by the hordes of the enemy—the hordes of ruthlessness, cruelty and German kultur, guarding our rights and privileges and defiantly holding these barbarians from their long-sought objectives.