

A Paper Knife from Ypres

By H. D. Ranns

RECENTLY there came to me a little, narrow, oblong box, wrapped in paper bearing a foreign stamp. When the box was opened there lay revealed a neat silver paper knife of chastest design, reposing on a bed of dainty and delicate blue silk. Everything about that box and the knife itself suggested leisure and culture and charm, and spoke of happy and dainty old world homes and places where books and pieces of fine artistry were to be found. If you were of an imaginative turn of mind you might dream all manner of bright dreams from the inspiration of that little article of library furniture, as it lay there in its narrow bed reposing. But your dreams would have a rude shock as you noticed across the handle of the knife the magic word "Ypres". It was the sight of that word of such tremendous import among the war words of this unspeakable war that arrested my glance and set me thinking—but not of leisured homes and happy ease.

The picture the sight of that word brought to one's mind was vastly different from that which the daintiness of the knife itself might have prompted.

Instead of the gentle arts of peace and homes of smiling prosperity, one saw a vision of a ruined city, battered and broken by the devastating hand of war, with inhabitants scattered and joyous homes laid bare to the unholy sight. Again, one saw noble buildings, well-nigh perfect in proportion and in poise, touched gently by the kindly hand of Time, softened and beautified until their ancient, grey grandeur made them a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. Then there came to mind the beautiful description by the greatest of Belgians, Maurice Maeterlinck, of the Grand Place in Ypres. "This square" he says, "with the enormous but unspeakably harmonious mass of those market buildings, at once powerful and graceful, wild, gloomy, proud yet genial, was one of the most wonderful and perfect spectacles that could be seen in any town on this old earth of ours. It constituted a peerless specimen of art, which at all times wrung a cry of admiration from the most indifferent, an ornament which men hoped was imperishable". But now the ruthless German guns have done their work—and the scene is changed. Great gaping wounds, torn and twisted masonry, ravished beauty and unutter-

able desolation, tell of the work of the Hunnish guns and wring a cry of indignation from the most apathetic beholder. One who has seen it recently writes to me that "to see the city on a sharp, frosty morning, with the snow on the ground and a slight mist hovering about the ruins is a sight that makes one instinctively tighten his grip on his revolver. Both the sight and the feeling are past description". This is something of the vision that came to me as I gazed at the name of the city written across the paper knife.

And yet that was but the beginning of the vision that came to me. The city forlorn, which John Buchan in his "History of the Great War" says is like one visited by an earthquake which caught the inhabitants unawares and drove them shivering to a place of refuge—this is food enough for sober thought on man's perversity. Did the feelings provoked by the sight of the word stay there, it would be pitiable enough. For these old world cities have their own atmosphere which cannot be reproduced and to have destroyed them is to have made the attempt to slay a soul. But fortunately even the Germans cannot destroy souls, and the soul of Ypres has not died, but lives in the lives of those who have loved her imperishable glory. The memory of what the city was will never die, and we may leave it, in ruins,

but beautiful and appealing in its heroic fall, leave it until the horror is over and the new city shall arise on the site of the old.

Now let us look at something more that the name of Ypres brings inevitably to the mind's eye. You are a strange Canadian if that name does not stir the foundation of your being as you recall the undying deeds done by the sons of Canada on that terrible Ypres Salient. For there it was that Canada faced fearful odds. There it was that the citizen army of Canada "wrested from the trenches the right to stand side by side with the superb troops who, in the first battle of Ypres, broke and drove before them the flower of the Prussian Guard". There it was that, on a peaceful day, warm and sunny, on April 20th, 1915, after a terrific bombardment of the city, the Germans launched their frightful gas, the French on the left gave way and the Canadians were left "in the air, enormously outnumbered. And there, through the day and through the night, and then through another day and night, fought under their officers until, as happened to so many, these perished gloriously and then fought from the impulsion of sheer valor, because they came from fighting stock." Of the glory and the terror of those days we who stayed behind can form no conception. We can but gratefully and reverently acknowledge the debt we owe to those men who made the name of "Canada" to be eternally and gloriously associated with the heroic and titanic struggle which saved the ruins we call Ypres to the Allies.

Standing out amongst many glorious deeds, we can recall with pride such incidents as how, when the 4th Canadian Battalion wavered for a moment, their commanding officer, Lieut.-Col. Birchall went to the head of the battalion, swinging a light cane, rallied his men and fell dead. We can, as Canadians treasure the glorious memory of such men as Col. Hart McHarg, Major Guthrie and Col. Boyle, who played such gallant parts in that drama of splendid terror. The cemetery of the little Belgian town of Poperinghe holds some sacred Canadian dust. Then we can be glad to remember, how the 8th Battalion (Winnipeg 90th "Little Black Devils") held the extreme left of the position at the most critical moment, and under their able and valiant commander, Lieut.-Colonel Lipsett managed to keep their flag flying, though with sore losses, as many a Winnipeg household later learned. All these things we can see before us as Canadians when we are confronted with the word "Ypres".

And so when we think of Ypres we have a vision of that grim line on the Salient, which has cost us so terrible a price to defend. Many a time and oft has the effort seemed too much and the price too exacting, and many a military expert has advised its evacuation. But there we are to-day, and the ruins of Ypres are still behind the British lines.

"I want to be procrastinated at de nex' corner," said Mr. Erastus Pinsky.

"You want to be what?" demanded the conductor.

"Don't lose your temper. I had to look in de dictionary myse'f befo' I found out dat 'procrastinate' means 'put off.'"

The Voice of the Sluggard

Now and then the best-laid plans of the housewife go wrong, as a certain matron discovered not long ago. Her cook could not rise in the morning in time to get breakfast, so the housewife bought an automatic phonograph, which could be set running at any desired hour. She put this machine in the cook's room, and promptly at six o'clock the next morning there came from the corner where it was concealed the words of the song beginning, "Tis the voice of the sluggard."

Breakfast was on the table to time that morning, but that night the cook concealed the contrivance in her master's room, and set it for four o'clock. The man of the house was wakened at that unseemly hour by a ghostly voice from under his bed singing, "Tis the voice of the sluggard I hear him complain." And now the housewife has neither cook nor phonograph, for her husband parted with both.

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for...

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\$45.00, for...

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for...
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for...

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