LETTERS ABOUT THE WAR FROM WIDELY SEPARATED COUNTRIES

Prof. and Mrs. Balis Send to The Ontario Copies of Several Exceedingly Interesting Missives from Correspondents Among the Nations Now at War.

Prof. and Mrs. Jas. C. Balis, Commercial Street, have during the past few days received the following very interesting letters from friends in countries widely separated, some of them living right near the war zone:

Wales, March, 1915.

My dear friends:—

Everything brings war near home to us, though we can never feel it here as it is felt on the Continent. I am so far removed from military people and affairs ordinarily, that I do not know when I last spoke to a soldier previous to this war. Now I'm continually writing to them, for they are the young fellows who come to see me and are frankly friendly as with each other. Of course, they are most of them gone; hence the writing. And I have no time to write! But they write me, what can I do?

This war places us pacificists in a queer position. Our ideals are quite opposed to military glory. We think that if only the people of all lands had the first say, they would not want to fight each other. But what has happened? The first thing that I knew that we had any intention of going to war was that it had already been declared. I supposed it was a time for action rather than deliberation, and never was a war waged by us with such unamity. But what about the other beligerents? Are we to suppose that the peoples of Germany and Austria wanted to fight? I'm still hoping that once this war is over, our enemies will allow their sentiments of friendship to assert themselves. The fact that Germans can make themselves so much at home in America shows that there is no natural hatred between them and the Anglo-Saxon race. I'm trying to think that for every "pal" of engaged in the war, there is an enemy counterpart who has gone forth to save his country, as he has been taught to think from the English menace. Yes, the English menace, or why utter that idotic "Gott strafe England?" For my part I feel quite sure that the English people never had any designs on Germany, but I think it unfortunate that a certain set should for years past have been representing a fight. France is the heridi tary enemy! Waterloo was a magic word in my youth. But there again, it was Napoleon, rather than the French, that was the enemy. If the Kaiser and his lot can be sent somewhere out of harm's way, we shall be quite content to make friends with the German people. I dare say you will put me down for a pro-German. You who are neutral won't mind that. Perhaps it is because I am pro-German that I hope and pray that the Allies may win, and win speedily. It will be the bestthing in the long run for Germany, I verily believe. Though I have never set foot on the Continent, Germany is far from being a foreign country to me. In my early youth my brother used to sing: "Was ist des Deutschen vaterland?" By good old Arndt.

I feel puite sure that in Germany, Austria and Turkey there must be thousands of people who deplore and deteest this war, but dare not say so. To many, no doubt, the Kaiser is a heroic patriot like King Albert, struggling to save his land and people, but to an increasing number he must be surely a blunderer and a nuisance, though they dare not say so. I suppose some of you know of the Associated Councils for fostering friendly relations between the two peoples. Ours used to publish the Peacemaker, while theirs use to publish Die Eiche, of which latter I had a copy a little before the war-cloud arose. Die Eiche, while it appeared, was frankly and solidly on the side of peace and friendship. Its writers are now muzzled or are trying to think they had been gulled by England, but surely their views must reassert themselves one day.

J. B. A.

North of France, March, 1915.

My dear friends:—

"Come and spend a quiet summer," wrot my aunt, and we accepted her invitation gladly, delighted at the prospect at spending some weeks under the hospitable roof of the old 11th century chateau. A large stone house with a turret at either end, standing in a deep and grassy moat, it has a very picteresque aspect. It was twice taken by the English in the 15th century and in '70 the Germans paid it a visit. Little did we guess how soon it was to be repeated! We had ouly just arrived when the war rumors began, but nobody believed such a horrible contingency possible, and far out in the country as we were, we kept our peace illusions till the last. On August 1st, in the evening, we rang up the neighboring town and a chill fell upon us all as the answer of the office came, "Private communication stopped"—on mobilize.

The actual mobilization only took place the following morning, when my aunt's oldest son, who is mayor of the village, received the offical telegram.

That same day all the men of an age to serve, had to leave, and many were the painful leave takings enacted under our roof, as in France, the servants are frequtently married couples. Our life from that day onwards was rather monotous as the carriage horses were requisitioned at once, and as we and our neighbors had had to part with our chaffeurs, the motors remained at home. In the ——— and in the greater part of France there is only one chateau in every village, and in the distances from one to the other are considerable, so it was impossible to organize sewing parties or ambulance classes, as is done in England. The arrival of the postmen was our only excitement. We never expected to have any fighting in our part, as everyone believed the war would take place in Belgium and in Alsac Lorraine.

On the 25th of August we heard the cannons very far off and the gendarms passing on their daily rounds assured us the sound came from the practising grounds at——— We readily believed them, as in all the papers was the assurance that the enemy would never pass Lille.

On August 29th, in the evening, my cousins were sent to the neighboring town. They came back at 10 p.m., to tell us that the town was in an uproar, as the enemy were approaching rapidly, passed——— which was burning. One hundred and twenty auto busses from Paris had arrived bringing infantry and ammunition. We opened the windows, in the black night thousands of lights were twinkling and ther was a distant roar from the many motors speeding along in all directions. Besides this was the tramping of horses, for from every village the inhabitants, seized with absolute panic, were fleeing in carts or on foot, leaving all their goods behind them. It had all come so suddenly we felt as if we were having a bad dream. As you can imagine, nobody went to bed, and at 1 o'clock we were all ready to run to the doors when we heard a regiment coming. We thought at first it was the Germans and were immensely relieved when it proved to be a regiment of French cuirassiers. We hastened to provide them with food and accommodation for the few hours they were to spend under our roof.

They left early on August 30th, full of confidence, a brilliant array of fine men and splendid horses. Meanwhile the roar of the cannon got nearer and nearer, at our door in fact, a few weeks later! However on the 30th it did not last long, at 3.30 p.m., ther was a sudden stillness, and soon afterwards a never ending procession of regiments passed our gate.

We had friends and relatives amongst them and one and all reassured us, the enemy had been repulsed very far and we could sleep in peace. Sleep in peace we did, after our previous bad night, and in blissful ignorance of the fact that the German artillery were also resting two hundred yards from our very door! The French army had retreated in the interests of the country and according to a necessary stratagy the advance of the Germans had to be tolerated and so we, in the ——— had to put up with them.

Early on Sunday morning, August 31st, two Prussian officers appeared and requested to see my aunt, and her sons. Very politely, one said, after introducing himself after the customary click of the heels, "We know you have a large and small motor, we require the large one for one of our generals: but it will be paid for after the war by the French Government, as it is always the Government of the vanquished country who pay for requistioned horses and cars." My cousin escorted the smiling captain to the garage and he expressed much satisfaction at the perfect condition of the car, and has he and his companions got in he said with great politeness, "Perhaps after all I can send you this car back from Paris in a few days." We contained our feelings as best we could and watched him tearing down the road with heavy hearts, for at the moment we feared the very worst. The morning passed by peacfully, not a sound was to be heard, at 2 o'clock we went to Vespers in the pretty little church just outside the bridge and arched gateway leading into the large courtyard of the old chateau. A very small gathering we were as the villagers had all fled the previous day. The priest had just given the Benediction when a child rushed in, crying, "Les Allemanda les Allemanda!" and at the same time we heard the tramping of horses and the clanking of artillery. The Cure with a gesture restrained the people ready to rush out, and in a few solemn words recommended them to have prudence in their acts and words so as not bring vengance upon themselves. We walked out calmly, and there, sure enough, were the Germans, in their gray clothes, with their closely shaven heads they looked like the barbarians that they are. As we appeared they all stopped their horses at a word of commandment, and the general and his staff got down from their motor car and advanced towards my aunt. The general introduced himself and his officers to us all and said, "Believe me Madame, I will do my utmost to maintain order. My first wife was a French woman, my second one is a Belgian, so you can understand my desire to cause you as little inconvenience as possible." The General then kissed our children and proceeded to the chateau, where with renewed excuses he gave orders to have the telephone wires cut. For the rest of the afternoon, watching our enemies at work, with curiosity and very unwilling admiration. There were 3000 in all in our village, several hundreds in our courtyard before us. They were evidently in great awe of their of their officers, and had been given strict orders, for not even a flower bed was damaged. Half an hour after their arrival they were served with hot soup from their portable kitchens; they told us fresh bread was baked daily in these same large ovens. After the meal the officers distributed cigars, looted like the dozens of chocolate boxes with which they seemed provided, all bearing the names of well known Brussels confectoiners. The courtyard was strewn with them after they had been greedily emptied.

The villagers told us that several soldiers went from house to house, offering for sale at a very low price a large stock of boots and shoes which they confessed to having stolen in the Amiens shops. "Buy cheap," they called out, and the money will help us to get to Paris!"

As you can imagine, neither the boost or the joke were appreciated by the villagers, who however, dared not give vent to their anger. Meantime the General had a notice posted up all over the village, warning the people that if they did not comply with the soldiers requests they would be shot; and that all houses were to be left unlocked and open all night with the lights burning. We were also informed that after 6 o'clock p.m., we were not to leave the chateau. We had been advised to dine with our enemies, so as to prevent unseenly gaiety. The dinner was a very painful one to all concerned, for necessarily the subjects of conversation were limited. There were long pauses when on both sides we racked our brains for something to say. I personally was spared this mental effort, as my neighbor, a captain of very Prussian appearance and of a very inferior social rank compared to the other officers, was determined to keep the ball rolling. He described with great gusto their triumphal entrance into Brussels, and informed me that in two days a similar entry would be made into Paris. I suggested that the Russians might eventually make an equally splendid show in Berlin, but he said no German was afraid of "those Russians," but as to the English, they were not bad soldiers, "but we soon get them out of our way." I should say that if my braggart of a captain is still on this earth he must find our plucky English soldiers very much in his way now, and what of your triumphal entry into Paris Herr Captain? My neighbor confessed however as to their all having been very much astonished at seeing Irish regiments as they thought they would be too busy at home. He then confessed his amazement at all our villages being empty, so I retorted that it was not surprising after their conduct in Belgium. Unmoved, my captain replied that the civilian population had not been agreeable to deal with. "When our desires are obeyed, we do nothing" he said "but if we meet with any he called the old butler and told him to go and fetch a dish in the kitchen which he desired to taste again! Inwardly boiling, the man had to comply with this ill-bred request. The officers retired at once after coffee had been served in the drawing room, they kissed our hands and the General thanked my aunt profusely for her hospitality—very unwilling hospitality we all said to ourselves. They left early, but an orderly was sent round the house to wake the servants and my cousins were sent for to preside over the morning breakfast. Behind our shutters we watched them leave with the fervent hope that we should see them no more. After this unwelcome visit we found ourselves under German rule, in the neighboring small towns the German flag was hoisted and patrols frequently passed through our village stopping sometimes at the chateau, seemingly to ask their way, but in reality to see what we were all about. Needless to say all the post offices were closed and wires cut, so we remained forty days without means of communication with the outside world, a strange position to be in in the 20th century and within ——— from Paris, under ordinary circumstances. My cousins procured a passport from a German officer, to enable them to drive to the neighboring town. They went to visit two hundred wounded, installed in a village a few miles from us. These unfortunate men, French for the most part, had been picked up in the fields around and taken to a half ruined chateau, where they lay on straw, tended by German doctors who had nothing at all to dress their wounds with. We sent them provisions and tore up all the old sheets that could be found. At first the German doctors received these visits with apparent gratitude but as time wore on their smiles turned to frowns we concluded that they had received bad news, and we proved to be right, for one day they all disappeared, taking their patients with them as prisoners. Just at that time a few Germans took up their abode in a cottage at the entrance to our village, and cutting down the telegraph poles made barriers across the road, forbidding anyone to pass beyond it. They remained a couple of days and then departed in haste, saying they were no longer safe. The following day, early, the peasants rushed up to our house to say that French troops were passing through. We were delighted and ran out to see the welcome sight and to greet the many relatives and friends we all owned in various regiments. All day long the troops passed through without a single break, and sitting in a cart we watched them. Suddenly some of isolated Germans were seen running in afield like so many frightened rabbits. Quick as lightning they were pursued by a machine gun motor, the fugitives turntd and fired, and received in reply a volley of shots One man fell, the others though wounded and were shot a few hours later. The man who fell, a young liutenant, was only slightly wounded. He gave himself up and flung down his arms. My cousin spoke to him in German and told him he would not be hurt. He seemed wild with terror and gasped out, "Are you sure I shall not be shot? Thank God! I see the French are not as cruel as I thought." He was hoisted into a motor and the long procession of troops which had been halted by this incident proceeded on its way. Throughout the afternoon, however, various German patrols were sighted they seemed to have lost their way and their heads, as they ran right into our troops, and soon firing was heard on all sides. The villagers were told to stay in their houses for fear of stray shots, we had to remain for some time in a cottage from whence we sought refuge at the chateau belonging to a cousin of ours. We stayed there for several hours until we heard no more shooting and it was almost dark when we ventured on our homeward journey of half a mile. Our car was stopped four times by our own officers, and we had to give our names and explain whence we came, as from that day private motors were forbidden to circulate. We were once again, to our joy, under French rule. The next day we heard the cannon once more after three weeks silence, and the seemingly never ceasing stream of French troops continued passing under our very windows. Every night we had officers billeted on us and received them gladly. They gave us what news they could, and through the military post we were able to send our letters out, but we would of course receive no reply, and we all longed for news of our absent ones. Our French soldiers had had a hard time of it in the Loraine, and still harder lay before them, but they had lost none of the gaiety of disposition so inherent to the French nature. One and all felt confident of the ultimate success of the Allies, and one and all paid high tribute to the magnificant fighting of the "contemptible British army." The Singalese regiments also passed our way, but to our enough to see them. They persisted great relief did not stop as it was in putting their enemies heads in their knapsacks and many had German ears strung together around their necks! The refugees of our own village returned at this time and were so agreeably surprised at not vnding their homes burnt down by the Germans, that they accepted the loss of their goods in a very philosophical spirit But one and all resolved to follow our advise and stick to their homes in future come what might. The inhabitants of all the neighboring villages also returned and over a hundred sarts passed our door. These poor people had, many of them, been as far as Normandy on foot or in carts and had suffered many hardshiqs in their flight They had hoped to find peace on their return, however, and they were welcomed by the sound of the cannon, which faint at first, grew nearer and nearer to us until it became a deafening roar. All day long the doors and windows rattled, every half hour aero planes passed to and fro and what with the constant sound of the motors the cracking of machine guns, and whizzing of the shells, the noise was terrific. We gradually, however, got fairly accustomed to it as did the animals around us. At first the cows huddled together, seeking shelter under trees, probably under the impression a fierce thunderstorm was going on, and the hens were not to be tempted from the hen house; but gradually they did as we did and went around as usual. In the evening we watched with sinking hearts villages burning in all directions. We counted four or five daily. The soft autumnal air was full of smoke or fire. Crowds of people sought refuge in our village, some had spent ten days in their cellars and at last in despair had ventured out, and fled amidst a volley of shells. Some were wounded, and my aunt and cousins dressed their wounds and advised them to continue their journty in search of a safe refuge than our village might prove to be. Some of these refugees told us that at——— the shells fell so continuously and the fighting was so fierce that the German soldiers seized with panic joined the villagers in their cellars. Their officers, revolver in hand, hunted them out and shot down a great many of them. We had at that time a series of moonlight nights, propitous it would seem for warfare, as the battles henceforth raged fiercer at night than by day. In the stillness we could distinguish the bayonet charges and the muffled yells of the infantry. There was something truly sinister in these sounds, in the dead of night. Sometimes when a formidable burst of cannon rent the air I sprang from my bed and began to dress in the expectations af I knew not what and as nothing happened lay down again and even arranged to sleep. One morning however, when to our dismay, in looking out of the windows we saw that the batteries had been erected five hundred yards from the house, and soon there appeared a number of men requistioned to dig trenches around the park. Our situation was becoming serious and the officers under our roof urged us to leave on account of the young children. A daily train was running from the town of ———, so in a farm wagon the only vehicle left to us, we made for it. All along the road we saw the shells falling. Refugees in carts or on foot, with wheel barrows and perambulators were to be seen all along the way, a meloncholy procession they made indeed! At M— we were able to find places in the train which was crammed and in twelve hours we were in Paris. It is a month since I left there and the chateau is still intact though the shells are still falling five hundred metres from it.

Those of the family who remained render first aid to the injured and over the comfort of the soldiers billeted on them daily. The owners of the neighboring chateau have also stuck to their posts, and their wives have done likewise, testifying once again the bravery of the women of France.

D. de B.

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MILITARY FUNERAL FOR PTE. NICHOLLS

Third Death Among Soldiers in 39th Battalion of Spinal Meningitis

(From Thursday's Daily)

Harry Nicholls of 57th Peterboro detachment "D" company, 39th battalion passed away in Belleville hospital at an early hour this morning of cerebro-spinal meningitis. He had fallen a victim of the dread disease less than three days ago. Nicholls had however during the past week or so not been feeling in the best condition

The death of Private Harry Nicholls makes the third in Belleville camp so fan, all of the one disease.

Private Nicholls was only 19 years of age. He was a son of Mr. and Mrs Daniel Nicholls. The young man prior to enlistment lived on a farm in Peterborough county

The remains were removed this morning to Messrs. Tickell and Sons Company's morgue and prepared for burial.

Shortly after one o'clock this afternoon Lt-Col Preston and the officers and men of the 39th battalion marched to Messrs. Tickell and Sons' morgue and escorted the body fo their dead comrade to the Grand Trunk depot for shipment on the flyer to Peterboro by way of Port Hope. No service was held at the morgue. The Fifteenth Regiment band was in attendance and played funeral music.

Before the hearse marched a company with arms reversed, while the rest of the regiment followed the remains.

The bearers were Privates Raymond, Worrell, Leach, Lighthall, Sargent, and Gummer.

An escort accompanied the remains to Peterborough

The men of the 57th detachment sent a floral anchor as their tribute to the late Private Nicholls

Mrs. Coughlin, Dundas street reports that some one took from a clothes line a small "middy" suit. Two pairs of socks were also taken from a neighbor's line

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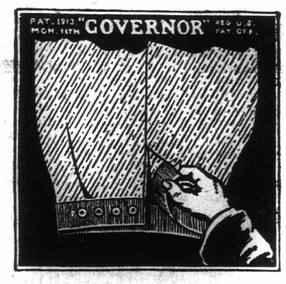

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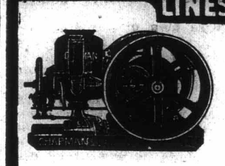

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