

## With the Canadians in France

Written for The Western Home Monthly by Capt. J. W. Wilton, M.P.P., Assiniboia

**M**UCH has been said and written of the glorious achievements of our boys on the embattled fields of Europe. Much still remains to be said and written before the full story of their accomplishments has been told. A more eloquent pen than mine must attempt to do justice to the theme, so it is my intention in the brief space at my disposal to send a message to the people at home who, while proud beyond words of what our men have done, are, nevertheless, beset with anxious fear as to their physical and moral welfare.

During the period I have been in France (now about eight months) I have had splendid opportunities to observe the conditions that obtain, and have obtained, amongst our men. I have seen them going into the trenches and coming out therefrom. I have mingled with them as they stood on duty gazing out over "No Man's Land"—the forward sentries of a threatened civilization! I have passed them on the road, bearing their heavy packs and equipment; weary, foot-sore and dust-begrimed at times, but always cheerful! I have watched them going through the monotonous drill and the daily grind of routine duty, which is an inseparable part of life in rest billets. I have been an interested spectator at the various games in which they have participated when the toil of the day has ended. I have also seen them in the canteens and estaminets with which this country abounds, and have heard and

according to Kipling do not "grow into plaster saints," I did not see one man under the influence of liquor. Could as much be truly said of a similar concentration of civilians at home, even in peace times? I think not! And yet it has been said that drunkenness is prevalent amongst our troops over here. It is a base calumny, and absolutely without foundation in fact.

Now as to physical conditions. Actual trench life is not, nor can it possibly be made, healthy; yet everything that can be done towards that end is done. The men, however, are not continuously in the trenches. Only a comparatively small portion of their time is spent therein, by far the larger part being spent behind the lines in reserve, or in battalion, brigade, division or corps rest.

While in reserve or rest, every precaution is taken to preserve the health of the men. They are inoculated against typhoid and vaccinated to prevent smallpox. Drinking water is tested by experts before consumption and treated to destroy all disease germs. Billets and quarters of all kinds are kept scrupulously clean, and flies (the great distributors of infection) are rarely seen in a Canadian military camp. Clean underclothing is liberally provided, and frequent baths are insisted upon. All food is carefully selected, rigidly inspected and distributed with the utmost regard to cleanliness. Clothing is supplied as required to meet the emergencies of the varying seasons,



British aviators map studying prior to a visit of destruction over the foe lines. They evidently anticipate the trip with pleasure

enjoyed the merry repartee which is passed about from one to the other including the madame or mademoiselle who usually presides over the last mentioned establishments.

After close, and I believe, accurate observation, for the period stated I wish to say to the people at home, and to state most emphatically, the boys are all right! Physically and morally they are as sound and wholesome as when they said "good-bye" and set out on this "Grand Crusade." He who alleges to the contrary has either not observed or has observed wrongly. Here and there a man succumbs, as at home, to the temptations which exist in this country as in Canada. There will be weaklings while the world lasts and "human nature is prone to err," but the number who have "been weighed in the balance and found wanting" is infinitesimal, while the names of those who have stood the test is legion. And what of the few who have perhaps stumbled? Let "he who is without sin (at home) cast the first stone." These also will recover and atone for any mistake made. "Nor is he the wisest man who has never proved himself a fool," therefore, I say that in the long run and at last, without exception, our Canadian boys are all right.

Permit me to give an illustration, the truth of which will be vouched for by thousands. Recently corps and divisional sports were held behind our lines. I was privileged to attend two of the latter, each of which was attended by at least 20,000 men, and the former where perhaps twice as many were present. Amongst this multitude of soldiers who,

and the officer who has a shabby man under his command renders himself liable to censure or something more drastic. In every battalion there is a tailor and a shoemaker whose duty it is to make necessary repairs free of charge. To every battalion also is attached a medical officer (a duly qualified medical practitioner), who is responsible for the health of the men, and generally speaking these officers fill their difficult and important positions efficiently and sympathetically. There is also a quartermaster with an ample staff, whose main duty is to provide a sufficient supply of good, wholesome food, clothing and the other things necessary to health.

The result of all this was seen at the sports I have referred to above. If the people at home could have seen the multitude of healthy young Canadians cheering vociferously at the baseball, football and lacrosse games, encouraging with their cheers the representatives of their battalions in the various events, and generally enjoying themselves as clean, healthy young manhood generally does, I say if those lugubrious ones over there who are dolefully shaking their heads and deploring overseas conditions, could see our boys as I, out here, have seen them, they would cease their wailing, hold their heads high with pride and thank God for a country which produces such men. May you across the Atlantic who have been privileged or compelled to remain at home see to it that our country is kept as pure and sound as her sons who have quitted her shores to preserve her liberties from destruction. May Canada remain a fit home for men who have per-

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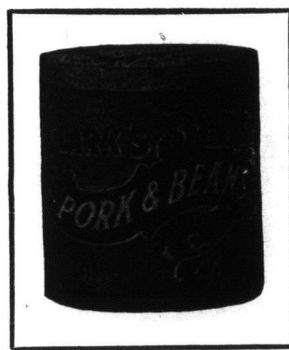
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