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Our European Trip

A Brief Account of our Pleasant Experiences with The Canadian Weekly Newspaper Party on our Trip abroad
By H. B. ANSLOW

Lille, June 24th, 1924
This morning we were again early on our way, and arrived at Lille about noon.
Lille was, right in the centre of things at various stages of the War. It was just behind the German lines, and was occupied by the Hun. The Kaiser made his headquarters when at Lille at the Hotel de Europe, where we were quartered during our brief stay.
In imagination we could see the busy scene in the courtyard, with its two exits, through which official cars passed, bearing officers of staff. On both sides of the courtyard were rooms used as offices, while the rooms above were used as sleeping quarters.
Upon the stairs railing and walls were still to be seen the spurs, marks, and bayonet cuts of the German soldiers quartered there.

A large part of the city was entirely laid waste, while other portions were damaged by shell fire. These damaged portions have been repaired, while much of the destroyed area has been rebuilt.
We were tendered a civic reception and luncheon here, and for variety of menu and wines was perhaps the most elaborate served so far on our journey. The usual toasts were proposed and responded to, and our hosts were most kind in their references to our brave Canadian boys.
Immediately luncheon was over we boarded charabancs and proceeded to the battle fields of this section, going from Lille to Ypres via Roubaix, Tourcoing, Menin, Dickebusch, Mont Kammel, Leers, Basleuil, Arras, and back to Lille where we were met by our hosts.

We spent the night, visiting Sanctuary Wood and Hill Sixty enroute. As our readers will easily recognize from the names mentioned this was one of the sectors in which the Canadian boys played such a great and heroic part during the war. As we went from village to village, now partially restored, and the inhabitants recognized us by the maple leaf pins we wore, we were frequently received with cheers, and the children gathered flowers and presented them to the ladies.

One of the first places we visited was a great mine crater made when the British forces mined a German position and blew it up taking the position.
All along the roads, which, by the way, are repaired and in fine shape, with thousands of young trees planted along them, we could see the concrete dugouts, gun bases and pill boxes which formed one of the German lines. One of these dugouts we visited, but found it vile smelling and stuffy.
All along the roads are piled up great heaps of scrap iron, and the ground was badly scarred with shell holes, and trenches. Now new villages have been erected, the fields leveled and this year wonderful crops are being raised. Of course all the buildings are of brick. Every village has its own brick yard.
The main crop seems to be rye, and this was nearly ready to harvest. The hay was about all cut, and what surprised us was the quantity cut off these small fields. We venture to say that the yield per acre was at least five times that of an average New Brunswick crop. Good crops of wheat and vegetables were also in evidence. The Belgian and French peasants are very industrious. We saw whole families working in the fields from early morning until late evening. No nine hour rule there, but the old custom, from daylight to dark, and the fields surely showed their industry.

For miles there was not a house or building of any description left standing in this section and the ground was badly scarred with shell holes, and trenches. Now new villages have been erected, the fields leveled and this year wonderful crops are being raised. Of course all the buildings are of brick. Every village has its own brick yard.
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We spent some time at Ypres. Our charabancs parked in the great square flanked by the ruins of the Cloth Hall on one side and St. Martin's Church on the other. The ruins of the Cloth Hall are just as the war left them, and will be left so but the church is being restored.

Here we had an opportunity of walking down some of the narrow crooked streets which lead from the square, and we could in our imagination see our Canadian boys driving the Hun back, fighting foot by foot not alone along the streets but from cellar to cellar under them.
The city is being rapidly rebuilt, and here we observed that in rebuilding the streets are being widened a few feet.
At Ypres we were very warmly received by the natives, and on every hand we could hear "Canadian."
We visited Hill Sixty near Sanctuary Wood. This is a spot sacred to every Canadian, as in and around this hill and through Sanctuary Wood thousands of our brave boys fought and died. It is on Hill Sixty that grounds have been laid out for a Canadian war memorial. Laid out in terraces, each step of which has been planted with roses and other flowers, it indeed presents a beautiful, but sad sight, and their were few dry eyes among our party.
A large concrete base has been placed here, upon which will be erected a large monument by the I. O. D. E. of Canada.
This was the very centre of heavy fighting and there are many cemeteries along the roads. In some of these the original wooden crosses are still marking the graves, but in many others the permanent marble slabs have been placed. All the British cemeteries are of a standard design and all will be finished alike. They are enclosed by a brick wall. At one end is an immense block of stone upon which is cut "Their names shall live forever." The rows of graves are neatly kept, and flowers are planted upon every grave. Our one regret was that we could not remain longer and hunt among the rows of crosses for the name of some brave boy whose mother would like to hear about. But with so large a party this was not possible, as it was essential that we all stick together.
With our party we had several young men who knew the section thoroughly, and as we drove along the various points of special interest were pointed out to us.
At 9:30 we arrived back at Lille, and were taken immediately to our hotel, where we had our dinner.
Wednesday June 25th, 1924
This was another lovely day. The fine weather which has favored us since leaving Canada is continuing. At 8 o'clock we are again on our way, but this time in a different direction. Our ultimate destination is Arras, but we visited enroute La Bassée, Lens, Vimy Ridge, Neuville St. Vaast and La Tregotte.
Here the general appearance of the country was much the same as that covered yesterday. At first we passed through country occupied by the Germans during most of the war, then gradually working down to Vimy Ridge and Arras.
In the morning we visited a large chemical plant near Lille, of which the Mayor of that city is one of the

owners. Most of this plant, which covers 100 acres, was destroyed by the Germans. We proceeded to Perenchies at which is located a large textile mill owned by the same company whose chemical factory we previously visited. This little town, the home of two thousand workmen employed in the factory was within the second line of German defenses, and consequently was entirely destroyed.

The factory and entire town has been reconstructed and is a model town in every respect. neat brick houses are provided, while recreation fields, etc., and a community hall were built.

We were taken to community hall where an employees' band of about fifty instruments greeted us and we were invited to a very fine banquet. When the band struck up "Maple Leaf" everyone was on his feet, also for "O Canada," "God Save the King," and the French National Anthem.

Addresses of welcome and suitable replies were made. The hall was tastefully decorated, including Canadian and British flags.

We are again on the road driving through La Bassée and Lens in the coal mining district with Lens ahead and we are stopped again at one of the large coal mine offices. The company operates fourteen mines in all, employing twelve thousand men.

We were greeted by music from another splendid band and entertained in the community hall to another banquet. The President of the company, M. L. Dupont, spoke very fair English and referred touchingly to the Canadian soldiers who helped in the defence—the splendid brave men that they were. The engineer, N. P. Weiss, and the director, M. E. Bartholme, also spoke. Our directors made suitable replies.

We are again on our way. We passed through Lens, now being rebuilt and arrive at Vimy Ridge.

One can have no conception of the obstacles which had to be overcome by the Canadians in the taking of Vimy Ridge. Our guides explained the action as well as possible, showing the positions held by the Allies away in the distance before the advance, and then pointing out the trenches and dugouts. From the ridge the Germans and finally taken by our brave boys. We followed the line of advance, trench by trench until we saw where the Hun had been forced off the ridge, and down on the level country behind it. In the rush the Canadians forced the Germans back some distance, but were recalled to the Ridge and there resisted all counter attacks.
In the trenches we took photos, and gathered many souvenirs in the shape of pieces of shrapnel, time fuses, pieces of telephone wire, and one of our party found a steel helmet.

As we looked out over the country from the top of Vimy Ridge, our eyes filled with tears as we thought of the thousands of brave boys who had died on its slopes. The only cemetery on the ridge is Seven Elms Cemetery which is completed and beautifully kept. From the ridge many villages are in sight. These are all new, as hardly a building was left standing in this vicinity. Here also about Vimy the fields are producing good crops.

Of all the country hereabouts Vimy Ridge alone has not been touched, and is today much as the war left it. The entire ridge has been granted to the Canadian government, and in time a war memorial park will be laid out there. Of course the trenches are filling up, and everywhere poppies and other wild flowers are growing. Here also we met in with large road making machines and crews, which were putting the roads in first class shape.

But time is passing and although many of us would like to linger, we are reminded that our train leaves Arras for Paris at 5:00, so we rejoin our charabancs and are again on our way.

Arras too was the centre of heavy fighting, and a large portion of the city was destroyed. However much of it is rebuilt and "business as usual" seems to be the rule.
Our party arrived at Arras station in good time to take the train to Paris. But here some of us intended to leave the main party and if possible visit certain cemeteries which contained the graves of loved ones.

Mrs. Anslow and I engaged a taxi to take us out the Arras-St.

Pol road to the Ligny-St. Flochel British cemetery, where Mrs. Anslow's brother, Pte. James Corbett, who was killed in the last months of the war, is buried with six hundred Canadian comrades. This cemetery is about fifteen miles from Arras, and is beautifully situated. We were fortunate in finding the cemetery attendant, a young English soldier, who takes great pride in his work. We found that this cemetery was complete in every detail, the marble slabs all in place, the walks laid out and the grass trimmed until not a blade seemed out of place. Upon each grave were planted Blue-bells of Scotland, pansies and roses. It was a lovely sunny evening and as we stood on this hallowed spot, with the birds chirping in the nearby bushes and everything so quiet and peaceful, we thought of the brave boys; our loved ones and yours; lying in these beautiful cemeteries and thought of the loved ones at home, who would be so happy to know that these graves are being so beautifully kept and looked after. The British government, which is bearing the expense of this work is to be commended for the thoroughness with which it is being done. We took a number of photos of this cemetery for loved ones at home.

Returning to Arras station shortly after seven o'clock we caught a through train to Paris at 7:15.

As the evenings are long, and we passed through miles of devastated territory, so interested were we that we forgot to look for our evening meal, until near Rheims, when an English gentleman directed us to the buffet car.

The railway embankment for miles seems to have been the chief line of defence of the French army. All along were concrete dugouts. The country on both sides was greatly battered, but is being reclaimed. Here we saw numerous villages of wooden houses, sent from America to house the refugees. These are being rapidly replaced by permanent brick structures. The country all about is being reclaimed for agricultural purposes.

We arrived at Paris about 11 o'clock and took a taxi to the Lion Palace hotel, which was to be our headquarters for our stay in Paris.

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Provided markets can be found, the fishermen have a golden asset at their doors. Much credit is due John G. Robichaud, M. P., who in the course of last session at Ottawa, succeeded in interesting the Department of Marine and Fisheries in this matter.

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