

The Arrival of the British Soldiers

As Told by a Belgian Scholar

"An incident happened yesterday," writes a soldier friend of the BRITISH COLUMBIA MONTHLY, "which caused me to remember again my neglected duty—hence this note. The little Belgian girl at this house in Renaise where I am presently billeted came in yesterday to show me a badge she had won for an essay on '*The Arrival of the British Soldiers in Renaise.*' . . . The essay is written just as she speaks, and shows clearly the foreign touch—just enough of it to make it attractive. The essayist is 14 years of age, and has been studying English for about one year."

The essay, which we reproduce, may be commended, not only for its spirit, but as a tribute to the teachers of English, and also to the intelligence and diligence of the scholar. No doubt the presence of the Allied soldiers, British and Canadian born, has helped to foster facility in English expression, and all the more so among apt and careful students of the type of the writer. The essay follows:

"Already, the 8th November, the Germans blew up the bridges, railways and causeways. Every one was afraid and durst not go out. Each day for us became more and more critical. . . .

"Suddenly! Saturday morning we heard the snoring of an aeroplane. Quick we ran out to look if it was an Allie. What joy! it was a French. In a minute all the civilians were on the street and acclaimed it from far. We prepared very quickly the flags and ribbons to decorate our houses,

then we said: They may come, everything is ready. . . .

"A few hours after, the last Germans were not at the top of the town, and the Allies were there. We saw a few men running on the street and cried: 'The British soldiers are there!' Then thousand enthusiast voices answered. . . . We ran, stumbled against the passengers going, we did not know where, to the encounter of the British soldiers. It was the exuberant joy, the happiness that we could not enough express. In a same patriotic transport all the hearts struck up in concert and acclaimed the coming of the liberators of our dear old town. Farewell pains, sufferings and troubles, for us it was the joy, the happiness. . . . We forget so quick when we are glad! . . .

"The Monday, 11 November, another feast: at eleven o'clock the armistice was signed. The church bells that have been asleep such a long time were now ringing again. How beautiful it was! We shall never forget that! . . .

"Next Sunday all the British, French and Belgian officers were invited to go to the church. When they entered, the organ played the National Anthems, the clergy meet them in the middle of the church, and then in a *Te Deum* every one thanked God for all the favours that He had accorded to us.

"Hurrah for our dear King!

"Hurrah for our dear Allies!

"MARIETTE VANDAMME."