

西线無战事

作者傳略

「好男不當兵」這句古話，代表了我國幾千年來一般民衆的心理。不但鄉下人見了丘八，如同小雞見了老鷹似的，嚇得魂飛天外，就是士大夫遇着他們，也彷彿蛇蝎在前，魔王當道，比談虎時還要加上二十四分的色變。單單說什麼人都不把他們當做好人，還是句客氣話，老實講，什麼人都不把他們當做人了。

可是，當兵的何嘗不是人，他們時時發洩的又何嘗不是人的本性。只爲了戰爭制度迫他們去拋棄了人所寶愛的父母妻子，嘗受了人所避免的寒暑饑渴，親近了殺人不眨眼的鎗彈，殘害了同穿制服同屬人類的對敵，幹着非人的行動，帶着非人的色彩，遂形成了一種似人非人的動物，冤哉枉也！然而他們的青春之火，仍不斷地燃燒着，他們的理智之潮，仍不斷地洶湧着；與其說他們人頭畜鳴，不如說他們人頭人鳴。

西線無戰事 (All Quiet on the Western Front) 是德國現代作家雷馬克氏 (E. M. Remarque) 描寫這種人鳴最出色的一部小說。

雷氏生於一八九七年。他的祖先是法國人大革命時代 (French Revolution) 遷至德國，住居萊因蘭 (Rhineland) 地方。十八歲時，他剛從學校出來，便投身行伍，上了西線。在戰爭期中，他的母親死了，他的朋友們也都陣亡了。停戰以後，他孤零零地生存着。和戰後其他的人們一樣，他的歷史象徵着深切的悽惶。他起先覺得休息和閒靜的必要，因做了一個偏僻的小鄉村裏的教師。後來他做了病院的琴師，音樂教師，小店經理，汽車商，文件代辦人，和戲劇批評者。後來他到外國住了些時候，曾在輪盤賭場上贏了一筆巨款，拿牠去做了旅行的川資。回國時，他做了大商店的外邦通信員，然後做了牠的廣告經理，最後更做了柏林的汽車專家和編輯。一九二八年，他不假思索，直捷地寫了他自己的和他朋友們的戰事的經驗。他寫這本書的動機，是由於他見着許多同時代的人們，雖然年紀還輕，却度着一種無結果，無興趣，無抵抗的生活，而且不知道爲了什麼原故。他想到這樣情形，以爲我們今日仍舊都吃着戰爭的惡果。他的書描寫了三件事情：1. 戰爭，2. 一代人的命運，3. 兵士們真正的友誼。

雷氏的自序說得很透切。他說，「這本書既

不算是控訴，也不算是供認，更不算是奇俠史，因為和死神面面相覷的人，並不把死當作奇俠的。這本書只是簡單地述及那些縱然沒有吃着彈子却已被戰爭摧殘了的一代人的種種。」

編者。

THIS book is to be neither an accusation nor a confession, and least of all an adventure, for death is not an adventure to those who stand face to face with it. It will try simply to tell of a generation of men who, even though they may have escaped its shells, were destroyed by the war.

ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT

CHAPTER I

WE are at rest five miles behind the front. Yesterday we were *relieved*, and now our bellies are full of *beef* and *haricot beans*. We are *satisfied* and at *peace*. Each man has another *mess-tin* full for the evening; and, *what is more*, there is a *double ration* of *sausage* and bread. That puts a man *in fine trim*. We have not had *such luck as this* for a long time. The cook with his *carrotty* head is begging us to eat; he *beckons* with his *ladle* to every one that passes, and *spoons* him out a great *dollop*. He does not see how he can *empty his stew-pot in time for coffee*. Tjaden and Müller have *produced* two *wash-basins* and had them *filled up to the brim* as a *reserve*. In Tjaden this is *voracity*, in Müller it is *foresight*. Where Tjaden puts it all is a *mystery*, for he is and always will be *as thin as a rake*.

What's more important still is the *issue* of a double ration of *smokes*. Ten *cigars*, twenty *cigarettes*, and two *quids of chew* per man; now that is *decent*. I have exchanged my *chewing*

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tobacco with *Katezinsky* for his cigarettes, which means I have forty altogether. *That's* enough for a day.

It is true we have no *right* to this *windfall*. The *Prussian* is not so *generous*. We have only a *miscalculation* to thank for it.

Fourteen days ago we *had to* go up and relieve the front line. It was *fairly quiet* on our sector, so the *quartermaster* who remained in the rear had *requisitioned* the usual quantity of rations and *provided for* the full company of one hundred and fifty men. But on the last day an *astonishing* number of English *heavies* opened up on us with *high-explosive*, *drumming ceaselessly* on our position, so that we *suffered severely* and came back only *eighty strong*.

Last night we moved back and *settled down* to get a *good sleep* for once: *Katezinsky* is right when he says it would not be such a bad war if only one could get a little more sleep. In the line we have had *next to none*, and fourteen days is a long time at one stretch.

It was noon before the first of us *crawled out* of our quarters. Half an hour later every man had his mess-tin and we *gathered at* the cook-house, which *smelt greasy* and *nourishing*. At the head of the queue of course were the *hungriest*—

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little *Albert Kropp*, the *clearest thinker* among us and therefore only a *lance-corporal*; *Müller*, who still carries his school textbooks with him, dreams of examinations, and during a *bombardment* mutters *propositions* in *physics*; *Leer*, who wears a *full beard* and has a *preference* for the girls from *officers' brothels*. He *swears* that they are obliged by an *army order* to wear *silk chemises* and to *bathe* before *entertaining* guests of the rank of *captain and upwards*. And as the fourth, myself, *Paul Bäumer*. All four are nineteen years of age, and all four *joined up* from the same class as *volunteers* for the war.

Close behind us were our friends: *Tjaden*, a *skinny locksmith* of our own age, the *biggest eater* of the company. He sits down to eat as thin as a *grasshopper* and gets up as big as a *bug in the family way*; *Haie Westhus*, of the same age, a *peat-digger*, who can easily hold a *ration-loaf* in his hand and say: Guess what I've got in my fist; then *Detering*, a *peasant*, who thinks of nothing but his *farm-yard* and his wife; and finally *Stanislaus Katezinsky*, the leader of our group, *shrewd*, *cunning*, and *hard-bitten*, forty years of age, with a *face of the soil*, blue eyes, *bent shoulders*, and a *remarkable nose* for *dirty weather*, good food, and *soft jobs*.

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Our gang formed the head of the queue before the cook-house. We were growing impatient, for the cook paid no attention to us.

Finally Katczinsky called out to him: "Say, Heinrich, open up the soup-kitchen. Anyone can see the beans are done."

He shook his head sleepily: "You must all be there first." Tjaden grinned: "We are all here."

The sergeant-cook still took no notice. "That may do for you," he said. "But where are the others?"

"They won't be fed by you today. They're either in the dressing-station or pushing up daisies."

The cook was quite disconcerted as the facts dawned on him. He was staggered. "And I have cooked for one hundred and fifty men——"

Kropp poked him in the ribs. "Then for once we'll have enough. Come on, begin!"

Suddenly a vision came over Tjaden. His sharp, mousy features began to shine, his eyes grew small with cunning, his jaws twitched, and he whispered hoarsely: "Man! then you've got bread for one hundred and fifty men too, eh?"

The sergeant-cook nodded absent-minded, and bewildered.

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Tjaden seized him by the *tunic*. "And sausage?"

Ginger nodded again.

Tjaden's *chaps* quivered. "Tobacco too?"

"Yes, everything."

Tjaden beamed: "What a *bean-feast*! That's all for us! Each man gets—wait a bit—yes, *practically* two issues."

Then Ginger stirred himself and said: "That won't do."

We got excited and began to crowd around.

"Why won't that do, you old carrot?" demanded Kaczinsky.

"Eighty men can't have what is meant for a hundred and fifty."

"We'll soon show you," growled Müller.

"I don't care about the *stew*, but I can only issue rations for eighty men," persisted Ginger.

Kaczinsky got angry. "You might be generous for once. You haven't drawn food for eighty men. You've drawn it for the Second Company. Good. Let's have it then. We are the Second Company."

We began to jostle the fellow. No one felt kindly toward him, for it was his fault that the food often came up to us in the line too late and cold. Under *shell-fire* he wouldn't bring his

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kitchen up near enough, so that our *soup-carriers* had to go much farther than those of the other companies. Now *Bulcke* of the First Company is a much better fellow. He is as fat as a hamster in winter, but he *trundles* his pots *when it comes to that* right up to the very front-line.

We were *in just the right mood*, and there would certainly have been a *dust-up* if our company commander had not appeared. He *informed himself of the dispute*, and only remarked: "Yes, we *did* have heavy losses yesterday."

He *glanced into the dixie*. "The beans look good."

Ginger nodded. "Cooked with meat and fat."

The *lieutenant* looked at us. He knew what we were thinking. And he knew many other things too, because he came to the company as a *non-com.* and was *promoted* from the ranks. He *lifted the lid* from the *dixie* again and *sniffed*. Then *passing on* he said: "Bring me a plate full. *Serve out* all the rations. We can do with them."

Ginger looked *sheepish* as *Tjaden* danced round him.

"It doesn't *cost* you anything! Anyone would think the quartermaster's *store* belonged to

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him! And now get on with it, you old blubber-sticker, and don't you miscount either”

“You be hanged!” spat out Ginger. When things get beyond him he throws up the sponge altogether; he just goes to pieces. And as if to show that all things were now equal to him, of his own free will he issued in addition half a pound of synthetic honey to each man.

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Today is wonderfully good. The mail has come, and almost every man has a few letters and papers. We stroll over to the meadow behind the billets. Kropp has the round lid of a margarine tub under his arm.

On the right side of the meadow a large common latrine has been built, a roofed and durable construction. But that is for recruits who as yet have not learned how to make the most of whatever comes their way. We want something better. Scattered about everywhere there are separate, individual boxes for the same purpose. They are square, neat boxes with wooden sides all round, and have unimpeachably satisfactory seats. On the sides are hand-grips enabling one to shift them about.

We move three together in a ring and sit down

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comfortably. And it will be two hours before we get up again.

I well remember how *embarrassed* we were as recruits in *barracks* when we had to use the *general latrine*. There were no doors and twenty men sat *side by side* as in a *railway carriage*, so that they could be *reviewed all at one glance*, for soldiers must always be under *supervision*.

Since then we have learned better than to be *shy* about such *trifling immodesties*. In time things far worse than that *came easy* to us.

Here in the open air *though*, the *business* is entirely a pleasure. I *no longer* understand why we should always have *shied* at these things before. They are, in fact, just as *natural* as eating and drinking. We might perhaps have paid no particular attention to them *had they not figured* so large in our experience, nor been such *novelties* to our minds—to the *old hands* they had long been a mere *matter of course*.

The soldier is on friendlier terms than other men with his stomach and intestines. Three-quarters of his *vocabulary* is derived from these *regions*, and they give an *intimate flavour* to expressions of his greatest joy as well as of his deepest *indignation*. It is impossible to express oneself in any other way so clearly and *pithily*. Our families and our

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teachers will be *shocked* when we go home, but here it is the *universal language*.

Enforced publicity has in our eyes restored the *character* of complete *innocence* to all these things. More than that, they are so much a matter of course that their comfortable *performance* is fully as much enjoyed as the playing of a *safe top running flush*. Not for nothing was the word "*latrine-rumour*" *invented*; these places are the *regimental gossip-shops* and *common-rooms*.

We feel ourselves *for the time being better off than in any palatial white-tiled "convenience."* There it can only be *hygienic*; here it is beautiful.

These are wonderfully *care-free* hours. Over us is the blue sky. On the *horizon float* the bright yellow, *sunlit observation-balloons*, and the many little white clouds of the *anti-aircraft shells*. Often they rise in a *sheaf* as they follow after an *airman*. We hear the *muffled rumble* of the front only as very *distant thunder*, *bumble-bees droning by quite drown it*. Around us *stretches* the *flowery meadow*. The grasses *sway* their tall *spears*; the white *butterflies flutter* around and float on the soft warm wind of the late summer. We read letters and newspapers and smoke. We take off our caps and lay them down beside us. *The wind plays with our hair*; it plays with our words and thoughts.

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The three boxes stand *in the midst* of the glowing, red field-poppies.

We set the lid of the margarine tub on our knees and so have a good table for a game of *skat*. Kropp has the *cards* with him. After every *misère ouverte* we have a round of *nap*. One could sit like this for ever.

The notes of an *accordion* float across from the billets. Often we lay aside the cards and look about us. One of us will say: "Well, boys. . . ." or "It was a near thing that time. . . ." And for a moment we fall silent. There is in each of us a feeling of *constraint*. We are all *sensible* of it; it needs no words to *communicate* it. It might easily have happened that we should not be sitting here on our boxes today; *it came damn near to that*. And so everything is new and brave, red poppies and good food, cigarettes and summer breeze.

Kropp asks: "Anyone seen *Kemmerich* lately?"

"He's up at *St. Joseph's*," I tell him.

Müller explains that he has a flesh wound in his *thigh*; a good *blighty*.

We decide to go and see him this afternoon.

Kropp pulls out a letter. "*Kantorek* sends you all his best wishes."

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We laugh. Müller throws his cigarette away and says: "I wish he was here."

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Kantorek had been our *schoolmaster*, a *stern* little man in a *grey tail-coat*, with a face like a *shrew-mouse*. He was about the same size as *Corporal Himmelstoss*, the "*Terror of Klosterberg*." It is very *queer* that the *unhappiness* of the world is so often brought on by small men. They are so much more *energetic* and *uncompromising* than the big fellows. I have always taken good care to *keep out of sections with* small company commanders. They are mostly *confounded* little *martinets*.

During *drill-time* Kantorek gave us long *lectures* until the whole of our class went, under his *shepherding*, to the *District Commandant* and *volunteered*. I can see him now, as he used to *glare at* us through his *spectacles* and say in a *moving* voice: "Won't you join up, *Comrades?*"

These teachers always *carry their feelings ready in their waistcoat pockets*, and *trot them out by the hour*. But we didn't think of that then.

There was, indeed, one of us who *hesitated* and did not want to *fall into line*. That was *Josef Behm*, a *plump, homely* fellow. But he did

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allow himself to be *persuaded*, otherwise he would have been *ostracized*. And perhaps more of us thought as he did, but no one could very well *stand out*, because at that time even one's parents were ready with the word "coward"; no one had the *vaguest idea what we were in for*. The wisest were just the poor and simple people. They knew the war to be a *misfortune*, whereas those who were better off, and should have been able to see more clearly what the *consequences* would be, were *beside themselves with joy*.

Katezinsky said that was a result of their *upbringing*. It made them *stupid*. And what Kat said, he had thought about.

Strange to say, Behm was one of the first to *fall*. He *got hit* in the eye during an *attack*, and we *left him lying for dead*. We couldn't bring him with us, because we had to come back *helter-skelter*. In the afternoon suddenly we heard him call, and saw him *crawling* about in *No-man's land*. He had only been *knocked unconscious*. Because he could not see, and was *mad with pain*, he *failed to keep under cover*, and so was *shot down* before anyone could go and *fetch* him in.

Naturally we couldn't *blame* Kantorek for *this*. Where would the world be if one *brought* every man *to book*? There were thousands of Kantoreks,