

Letters from The Boys Who Have Gone to Make the World Safe for Democracy

Letter received last week by S. H. Davis from his son, Leon, formerly editor of The Times, and now with the American Expeditionary Forces in the front lines in France:

Somewhere in France, August 16, 1918. Dear Dad:—Some time has elapsed since last I favored you with a letter. Well, in connection with this occurrence I can truthfully say that a great deal has happened since then.

One of the greatest battles of the war has been fought and a great victory won, while the strength of our own free land has been tried out, weighed in the balance and found to be full measure. We have crossed swords with the Hun and have battered his tin hat until it looks like the last tomato can in the back alley.

From what I have seen there are no more courageous troops on the battlefield than the first American army. They are the men who have suffered, endured and died first for that liberty which every American holds so dear.

I wish that I could blot forever from my mind some of the scenes which have filmed themselves upon my mind and cannot be forgotten. This, indeed, is "The Valley of the Shadow of Death." And the man who enters is not the man who comes out. He is different; he is either broken or he emerges reborn, a lion to be some day loosed on this foe who will know no quarter or mercy at the hands of an awakened humanity.

Woe is the land in which the "Kultur" of Germany has been practiced. And pitiful are the tales of the refugees whose aged or faltering steps have cast them into the hands of the Hun.

To my mind there is no prettier country in France than the Battlefield of the Marne and at one time there were no prettier villages than those which lay among the hills there.

All this has been transformed

by the inferno that has been loosened, and now all that remains of the villages are heaps of mute ruins where once the happy people of France carried on the business of life. The fields and the farms have fallen beneath the shock of the assault and the defense. The stark and naked hillsides and ruined woods are evidences of the fierceness of the battle.

Once there were hopes in the heart of the Hun that he might harvest the rich wheat fields, but he reckoned without the cost and it was a different crop that has been harvested here. The gray-clad skeletons that strew the fields are evidence enough.

Ah, yes! But the details! What is the army we face somewhere out there? Indeed it is strange at times to contemplate. I have seen mere lads of 14 or 15, lying motionless beside their silent machine guns, and brawny men chained to their posts. There are women, too, who wear the gray and operate the guns. They have sunk to the lowest level and have resorted to the last means to carry their cause on to victory.

They have claimed that their retreat was planned, but the evidence gives the assertion the lie. They have built railways toward their objective and have moved in great quantities of ammunition, which, in their hasty retreat, they were compelled to leave behind.

So fast has been their retreat that they dropped everything in their haste. From an old lady I got a line on their reason for such action. According to her statement, the German soldiers were in great fear of the oncoming Americans and tumbled head over heels to make their escape.

This same old lady told some of us that she was held a captive by the Germans for two months and during that time they were given nothing but black bread. There was also a son captive at the same time. He

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could not make his escape because I took him for an old man, his cause he was a cripple. At first (Continued on page 5.)

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