

Final DraftINTRODUCTION

Historian Percy L. Climo needs no introduction to his wide circle of readers, since his research about Cobourg, the town of his birth, is known far and wide.

In this volume about letters home, he takes us back through five years of correspondence of local and nearly local service men and women during the dreadful period of World War One. We are taken from Valcartier Camp to the ships of the First Contingent, bearing the First Division to the rain and mud of Salisbury Plain. There are letters from those ~~XXXXX~~ waiting in Canada, fearful that the war will be over before they can get in a blow at the Hun. Once they get across ^{the} English Channel and into combat, as the years go by, their letters reflect the cheerfulness, the comradeship, ^{comradeship,} the pride of being members of the best shock troops in the Allied forces. They share their parcels from home, their Red Cross comforts, their plum and apple jam with one another. We see them valiantly pushing ahead although comrades fall to the right and to the left; we see them wounded, yet not despondent; we see them silently paying tribute to their departed friends as their Padre conducts burial services at makeshift graves. It is not, however only in Flanders that they served, but also on the seas and in the air, their letters ranging from the United Kingdom to the Dardanelles, even to German East Africa; from hospitals in England and France to hospitals served by Nursing Sisters and Doctors in Egypt. We even hear from Prisoner of War Camps.

Finally comes November 11th, 1918. We get the reaction of those still facing the foe and of those on leave in Blighty; I was struck by the insight of ~~XXX~~ one Sergeant on leave in Ireland who, after analysing the situation there, concluded that: "There will always be an Irish question." The years of conflict have made a deep impression on them and their thinking is much more mature.

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The letters conclude with the heartfelt yearnings to speed up the repatriation system and get the "boys" home early in 1919, so that they may return to ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ civilian life that they so eagerly anticipated. Mr. Climo saw two older brothers go off to war; fortunately, he was to see them both return.

I have considered it an honour to write an introduction to Mr. Climo's book. The contents have been a revelation to me and I heartily recommend it for both the historian and the casual reader.

Lt. Col. C.Gordon King, E.D.
September 25, 1989.
