

LETTER FROM. REV. I. M. GREY TO COMMUNITY

Former Pastor of Congregational Church Addresses Letter to Friends Thru Reporter

Martincourt, France, March 22, 1919. Mr. C. H. Staats, Downers Grove, Ill., Dear Mr. Staats:

It has not been because of indifference, I assure you, that so long a silence has been permitted to intervene since my departure from Downers Grove on my mission overseas. On the contrary, not a day has passed but that my thoughts have traveled back over land and sea to that dear sequestered spot among the maples. After a long stretch of strenuous duty as a Y. M. C. A. hut secretary, I am just now enjoying a little respite due to the removal of a number of soldiers who were being served by this "Y" and also I am taking the opportunity to do some much-needed mending, "polishing-up" and letter writing. Wish I might write to all my friends individually, but that being impossible, I shall have to content myself with a general letter thru the Reporter, by your kind indulgence.

Space does not permit an account of the voyage from Boston to Liverpool nor of the trip thru England. Neither will I attempt to describe an extremely turbulent passage across the Channel from Southampton to Havre—during all of which I was fortunate enough to be one of the few who didn't get sick. After a wonderful time in London and never-to-be-forgotten experience in Paris, it was my rare good luck to be assigned to a combat division in the Second Army—the Seventh Division with headquarters first at Noviant and...

The Division is scattered over quite an area in the region north of Toul, between the Meuse and the Moselle rivers. Perhaps I may interject here that on my way from Paris I passed along the valley of the Marne, thru Chateau Thierry, the scene of America's first great triumph, the place where the Germans began the retreat which didn't stop until they cried their last "Kamerad" on November 11th, and here also I am on historic ground, as regards American battle achievement. The St. Mihiel drive of September 12-13 included this territory in its operations. Martincourt, my location, is almost due east of St. Mihiel about 15 miles. Verdun lies about thirty miles northwest, and Metz about 20 miles northeast. Nancy is about 12 miles southeast. The Lorraine border is only seven or eight miles distant. By consulting a war map you will see that the old Hindenburg line stretched across this area. That boasted stronghold, so long declared impregnable, is only a short run from here. Its shattered concrete trenches, dug-outs and gun-emplacements may be crawled thru and clambered over with impunity—by the right persons. To its creator and his "invincibles" it is "verboten." This is a sad, pitiable country to behold. Everywhere one sees the blight of war. Even in this sector, which is hardly to be compared with such a battle-ground as Verdun, hardly a town or village has escaped. Field and forest, valley and hill, bear the disfiguring scars of zig-zagging trenches, gaping mine and shell craters, yawning dug-outs, and mile upon mile of wire-entanglements, with other miles of camouflage screen hiding the roads and fortifications from aerial observers. Right across France and Belgium, from the Lorraine border to the North Sea there stretches a continuous belt of desolation, wreckage and ruin. I have now been over a considerable part of it and am appalled by the horror and magnitude of it all. Just a week ago I attended a Y. M. C. A. conference in Luxembourg, going by the way of Metz, and returning thru southern Belgium, down along the Meuse thru Verdun and St. Mihiel. I have had presented to me in unforgettable terms the contrast between an unscathed, well preserved Germany and a broken, ruined France. On one side, vast industries, peaceful villages, prosperous cities and towns, and magnificent farms served from thriving villages. On the other side, wrecked factories, spectral ruins marking the site of city and town; desolated, blighted, scarred fields and forests, and acres and acres of white crosses. Words cannot describe it. And yet there are those who would let Germany escape the just penalty of her monstrous wrong! Mercy? Magnanimity? Yes. But fairness and justice also—mercy without justice to the wronged would be a mockery. Germany must be made to bring forth fruits meet for repentance and repair the ruin she has caused.

until then, will she be fit for a place in the society of nations. I know what "no man's land" looks like for I have been thru it. I know what the essence of a Godless German Kultur is, for I slept one night amidst the ruins of old Verdun. Sometimes I try to shake it off as if it were a horrible night-mare. Insanity of insanities, villany of villainies, sum and substance of all diabolism is war. May such an outpouring of hellish fury never visit this earth again! In the zone of battle the populace was pretty generally compelled to flee, but now are returning to their homes (often only a pile of ruins) to begin life anew. In and around these towns and villages are billeted our American troops, from a company up to a battalion or even more. A stranger background for our transplanted young Americans could hardly be imagined. It stirs one's blood to see these ancient villages literally swarm with animated khaki. Martincourt is typical. Situated in a deep valley by a winding stream which turns the wheel of the old grist mill, the hamlet is surmounted on one side by a sheer bluff on the edge of which stands an old castle said to have been built in the eleventh century by a feudal lord. Imagine the sensations and thrills of this old gray turreted landmark if it could speak! What would it say as it looks down on the spectacle of these rapid-moving, lusty-lunged, headlong iconoclasts and tradition-breakers that came from across the seas! One could guess the answer from the amazement which even yet shows itself in the faces and exclamations of the villagers. I am not sure that it is always a good-natured amazement, as for instance, when a wooden-shod peasant, trudging along the road at a tenth century pace has to "step lively" to get out of the way of a thundering, snorting three-and-a-half ton truck! Yet while he can't for the life of him understand our inordinate love of speed, or comprehend our failure to admire and appreciate the carefully heaped and tenderly guarded manure pile under his parlor window, or fathom our perverse fondness for fresh air in our sleeping quarters, still he gets along very well with his American neighbor and guest. The Yank may have queer notions about sanitation and hygiene, but he's a mighty likable fellow just the same! It is a strange setting, I say, for youthful America to find itself moving around among buildings bearing dates on their cornerstones and lintels that were there before the Declaration of Independence was signed. And what about the boys themselves? This letter would stretch out to interminable lengths if I should attempt to tell even a tithe of the story. It is a story of once dramatic and intense, containing all the elements of comedy and tragedy, pathos and humor, that go to make up a great epic. One has to be a part of it to understand what it means. Some things defy description—they cannot be set down on paper. They must be felt and experienced to be appreciated. Those spiritual qualities which enter into the life of this new strange brotherhood which roots itself in a common experience of hardship, privation, suffering, endurance—these cannot be defined. I count it one of the supreme privileges of my life to have been admitted to this experience. Thru the most difficult part of perhaps the most trying winter most of us have ever experienced, I have lived with the boys, shared their common lot, and entered into their common life. There is no doubt about it—the months since the signing of the Armistice have constituted for these men as crucial and trying an ordeal as could well be imagined. Not the active, all-absorbing strain of warfare. That had at least the saving quality of preoccupying their minds. This has been the passive test of tedium, suspense, monotony, homesickness. How often I have heard it during those dreary, drizzly, winter days—"while the war was on we didn't mind it—something doing all the time, and no chance to think about ourselves or get homesick. But this! Why, it's enough to drive a man crazy!" Day after day the dreary round—"K. P." guard duty, drill, drudgery, and that under living conditions that would be hard to describe. Mist, mud, muck, manure, monotony! And this is no reflection on the care which the army has given the men. It is simply the natural background afforded by a war-wrecked country, accentuated by a particularly disagreeable winter climate. It is one of the inevitable and inexorable concomitants of war. Living in cow-stables, shell-torn buildings, dug-outs and shacks is not conducive to merriness of heart. And when you add to that complete isolation from organized amusement and entertainment, you have a picture of life in Martincourt as I saw it two months or more ago. No social diversion or religious meetings, and hundreds of men swarming about the village. The one bright spot in it all has been the Y. M. C. A. But for that, our boys following their return from the fighting line and for weeks on end after-

wards, would not have had a solitary place to go to write letters, read or while away the long winter evenings. At first our hut was situated in a miserable, dingy, ill-smelling hovel, utterly inadequate and unsuitable for our purpose. Later on quarters were found in the village school house and town hall, one of the most modern buildings in the place, erected in 1844. We occupy a room about thirty feet square, a crude, roughly finished chamber, with oiled canvass serving as window panes, but to the men it is a veritable palace. And to this refuge the men have been coming from miles around. Here I conduct a canteen where almost anything that a soldier needs in the way of little conveniences can be had at U. S. Quartermaster Commissary prices. Here the boys get the daily papers (European editions of Chicago Tribune, New York Herald and London Daily Mail, and the Stars and Stripes) play games, write letters, enjoy entertainments and attend religious services, which I conduct every Sunday. Recently a small but very select library was added to our equipment which the men enjoyed immensely. When we got our little phonograph in January, many a fellow heard the first music since last summer. How they did drink in the scratchy music. Where their throats and longings are is shown by the records that are most played—the home songs such as "Mother Machree" and "My Little Gray Home in the West." I have seen a roomful of men hushed instantly into silence when "Mother Machree" was put on. Their hearts are back home, and home is what they talk of by day and dream of by night. And so I have been doing my best to bring the ma touch of home, to take the place of mother and father, brothers and sisters, whose service must be rendered through my hands. I try to visualize the home background of each lad and that calls up to my imagination scores of sweet-faced mothers every day whose anxious, longing looks spur me on to do my best for their boys. And I shall never get over the response, the appreciation, which even the smallest service calls forth! I am afraid it will spoil me for civil life when I get back home again. I want to say a word about the spirit of the men. Altho having undergone great fatigue, hardships, and suffering during the fighting and since, I have been amazed at their buoyancy, optimism and good cheer, in spite of trying conditions. It has been a tonic to me more than once. I don't remember meeting a single "grouch" up here! I say without hesitation that for physical fitness, mental alertness and balance and general morale, I have never seen a finer body of men anywhere. General Foch's recent characterization of our men as "superb" was well merited. And, speaking as a militarized civilian, and therefore one of you, I want to say that we owe a debt of gratitude to these veterans, for our own and our children's sakes, which nothing we can ever do for them can ever repay. And as one who writes from the scene of conflict, where thousands of our boys shed their blood, where other thousands linger in the hospitals, and where innumerable little white crosses testify to the valor and courage and fidelity of those who will never return, I hope that the people back home will see to it that this shall not be in vain. I hope the new Liberty Victory Loan in April will be put across strong, so as to insure a successful demobilization and a good start on the road to that new, reconstructed order that is to be. I hope the American people will back the President in his endeavors to lead the peoples of the world to a better day, a saner and more humane method of settling international disputes, a better order of society in which shall have no place. I believe that the men of the A. E. F., in common with their brothers-in-arms of the Allied armies, want an end of war. I believe that the strongest proponents of peace are the men who have fought in this war. I am also more firmly convinced than ever that only as mankind becomes permeated with the spirit of Jesus Christ can this new and better order be realized. With very best wishes to you all my friends in the Grove, and hoping this finds you all well, I remain, Sincerely yours, Ira M. Grey.

Permanent address—12 Rue d'Aguesseau, Paris, France. c/o American Y. M. C. A.

Species of Fern. The island of Mauritius, less than one-third the area of Delaware, has 285 native species of ferns; Java, a little larger than New York, has 400, while Brazil contains 387. All Europe furnishes but sixty-seven species, the arctic zone, 28; North America, north of Mexico, has about 175 native species.

Real Definition of Politics. Politics is but another name for God's way of teaching the masses ethics under the responsibility of some prominent historical or modern figure.

\$3,000 IN THREE HOURS LUTHERAN LIBERTY DRIVE

Reports received at headquarters indicate success of the campaign for Three Million Dollars in Liberty Bonds by Lutherans of the "Missouri" Synod of the United States. This sum is to be the foundation for a permanent Endowment Fund to care for incapacitated pastors, professors, teachers or their widows and orphans. The actual drive for bonds took place Sunday, March 30, 1919, from 2 to 6 p. m. Fifty thousand workers thru out the United States were actively engaged. First reports show an average of more than \$2,000.00 per congregation, and as there are more than 3,000 congregations in the Synod, an over-subscription is indicated. The leaders in this campaign also feel sure that many of their fellow Lutherans will not send in contributions until after the Victory Loan is subscribed. They will buy these new securities of the government and then give their share of these to the commended as helping the government commended as helping the government and helping the "Veterans of the Cross." Statistics show that the members of this one Lutheran Synod alone bought considerably more than fifty million dollars' worth of Liberty Bonds. It is particularly fitting that such Liberty Bonds, bought to help our soldiers and sailors win the war, should now—the war being won—be donated to help keep "Veterans of the Cross" free from want and worry. The Purpose and plan of this great campaign have received the following warm commendation from the government:

Treasury Dep't., Washington D. C. March 31, 1919. Mr. Theo. H. Lamprecht, President, Lutheran Laymen's League, Campaign Executive Committee, 139 N. Clark St., Room 809 Chicago. My dear Sir: We acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 17th inst. giving a detailed outline of the campaign of the Lutheran Laymen's League of the Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States, for the \$3,000,000 Endowment Fund, this fund to properly care for incapacitated pastors, professors, teachers or their widows and orphans. You advocate donations of Liberty Bonds wherever possible, and plainly state with the cash contributed to this fund Victory Liberty Bonds will be noted, so that ultimately the total fund created will be invested in the War Loan Securities of the United States Government, to be held until maturity. We note this with much gratification because we felt that you are not only engaged in a noble, just and deserving cause, but that you combine with it commendable service to the Government in a three-fold manner. 1. By asking contributions in form of Liberty Bonds which will be held in trust until maturity, you assist in stabilizing the securities by withdrawing them from the market. 2. By advocating the donations of Bonds, already purchased, you do not interfere with the availability of the cash savings or holdings of the individual for support of the Victory Liberty Loan, and 3. By investing cash donations to your fund in the Victory Liberty Loan you contribute towards the success

of this great cause. We wish you well in your undertaking. Very truly yours, (Signed) Hans Rieg. Publicity Bureau, Treasury Dep't. New Invention. An inventor has equipped a parachute with hand operated propellers on the theory that a user can guide his descent thereby.

Secret of Happiness. The happiness of life is made up of minute fractions—the little charities, a kiss, a smile, a kind look or word, a heartfelt compliment in the disguise of a joke, and the countless other essentials to peace of mind which are few, simple and always close at hand. If we would cultivate the habit of making a note of these things, we would get more pleasure out of the common experiences of everyday life and should soon master the secret of happiness.

How The Youngsters Will Love Their Swim Gas Water Heater Western United Gas and Electric Company

There's Independence in Owning a Car of Your Own LINCOLN GARAGE H. C. KAMMEYER PHONE 16 HINSDALE, ILL.

Now All Together Let's Finish The Job! THE BOYS FINISHED THEIRS "OVER THERE" SHALL WE SLACK NOW? TO PAY THE WAR'S BILL WHEN WE HAVE THE CASH "OVER HERE" BUY BONDS NOW! THE WORLD'S BEST INVESTMENT! Potter Mfg. & Lumber Co. MANUFACTURERS AND DEALERS BUILDING MATERIALS OF ALL KINDS LUMBER — COAL — MILLWORK OUR POLICY Prompt Service, Best Quality, Right Prices