

[James V. Bryson]

Author of »All Quiet« on First Visit to U.S.
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Author of »All Quiet« on First Visit to U.S.

Erich Maria Remarque Says »Little Fires« Are Kindling New Phase of World War.

Special to the Post-Dispatch

NEW YORK, March 24.—Erich Maria Remarque, German expatriated author, whose best known work, »All Quiet on the Western Front,« has been bought in 37 languages by more than 5,000,000 persons, arrived on the Cunard White Star liner Queen Mary yesterday for his first visit to this country. He remarked that he was torn emotionally between his deep admiration for America as »she is becoming the savior of the world« and anxiety bordering on despair for the plight of »worn-out Europe.«

Remarque expressed the conviction that a »new phase of the World War« was being kindled by such little fires as those started by the Japanese and in Spain.

»All is not quiet,« he said. »The World War since 1914 has been going on. Some people today think that war will be the boom of a big shock and that 100,000 persons will be destroyed the very first day. I think not. Rather, it is the little fires, even that in Czecho-Slovakia, that will slowly become the big world ›fire‹.«

Fur Robe and Muffler.

Remarque has the regular, small features of an Alsatian type, rather than the facial character usually associated with a German urban citizen. He carried, or, rather absent-mindedly dragged, an old fur robe and wore a heavy muffler, explaining that both were necessary because he still suffered from »trench« lumbago and throat trouble.

He spoke hesitant English, pronouncing certain words perfectly and fluently, although his education in English began only two weeks ago »in bar rooms ashore and at sea and by listening to American songs on gramophones. So my language may be a bit too romantic,« he said.

He disclosed that he was undertaking the most comprehensive work of his career, a book about political refugees. His own works were burned in a public square in Germany by the Nazis. He has lived as an exile in Switzerland for eight years, and one year ago became a man without a country when he was deprived of his German citizenship.

»Even so, if the world war comes soon – it may be tomorrow – who can say? – I can neither fight for nor against Germany,« he said, »regardless of what happens.«

He then said that he was here to visit more than 100 friends, to see his publishers, Little, Brown & Co., in Boston regarding his forthcoming book.

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Longing to Come to America.

»My longing to come to America was increased by the recent words of your President in respect for the Nazis, and, then I have a heart for the people here,« he said quietly, adding that »in Europe the people are worn out, while her middle-aged people are young. I like the direct manner of your people. I feel that your literature now is the world's greatest. You have such fine authors as Hemingway, Faulkner, Sinclair Lewis, Dreiser, etc.«

Remarque then told laughingly of how originally a German publisher refused to publish »All Quiet on the Western Front« because the author would not permit the character-author in the book to live, instead of dying.

The Ullstein publishing firm then consented to publish it with the prediction that it would not have sales in excess of 1000 copies, he said.

He hopes to visit Hollywood, but »who knows, my visit may be cut short. It looks like war,« he said sadly.