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Remarque to Flee Spotlight's Glare
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German War Novel Author Would Like to Come Here, but Fears Invitations to Lecture

Chained to Book, He Says

Written to Free Him From Past, it Has Revived Old Horrors Too Vividly, Writer Asserts

By Wythe Williams.

Special Cable to The New York Times.

Berlin, Oct. 10.—Erich Maria Remarque, author of »All Quiet on the Western Front«, as a result of too much notoriety, has announced his intention of following the example of Alain Gerbault and disappearing into the unknown.

Souvenir hunters have even taken the name-plate off of my front door,« he asserted today. »So, my plan now – I have not yet talked about it to any one – is that in a few days I intend to leave Berlin. I cannot work here. I am not left alone for a single minute. I really want to disappear altogether – change my name, let my beard grow, start a new life and possibly never write again.

»Why should one write books if he has no longing to do so? One cannot get such feeling on command, as a mere profession.

»I want once more the experience and happiness of curing a sick puppy that everybody has given up, or spend all my thoughts testing the possibilities of the automobile.

»I have been invited to lecture in Scandinavian, but I would not be a success, for I could only talk about dogs, automobiles and fish.«

The author smiled wearily and pessimistically as he regarded a small aquarium between his library windows containing an exotic brightly colored fish.

Another Book Planned.

His subsequent remarks, however, dispelled the idea that he might not continue writing, for he said:

»In my next book, which I am now writing, I describe the way back to life, how a young man like myself – and Paul Baeumer – experienced war as a youth, who still carries its scars and who was then grabbed up by the chaos of the past-war period, finally finds his way into life's harmonies.«

The author then told of his troubles of selling »All Quiet on the Western Front«. He said:

»You must not think I made a fortune with that book. I made all my contracts as an unknown man. When writing the book I may have experienced something inspirational – a sort of

demoniacal ecstasy – but that I tried to sell it was quite natural. The first publisher to whom I offered it kept it a long time. Then I accepted an offer from the Vossische Zeitung, but they, too, hesitated. They found the manuscript had too little action and suspense for a newspaper. So they held another manuscript ready for use if their public failed to show interest.

Believes He Cannot Lecture.

»If I were to accept offers now for lectures I would get much more than from all the editions and translations. But I cannot lecture. Anyhow, I have enough for a few years. Meanwhile I hope to turn out something else.

»I have nothing to do with the filming of the book. Mr. Laemmle, who, by the way, is a quite agreeable person, wanted me to write the scenario. But in spite of his splendid offer I refused. I want to occupy myself with new things.

»I will not even know who will be his leading actor. I would like to visit America when the production is made. I would like to see all of America, but then I might be called on to make speeches.

»I do not feel like a writer. At present I have only one thought, and that is to get away from everything.

»I wrote ›All Quiet‹ in order to free myself from something I felt as pressure, as fetters. And now everything is coming up again like a giant phantom and faces me with every step to dig up the past again. I wrote a book which had the luck to become famous. Now I want to gather something new for a book which shall have a value in itself, unfavored by name and publicity. But it seems I never shall be allowed to ›be myself‹ again.

»I have been appointed, it seems, as administrator of my first book for life. At present I am a prisoner, but soon I shall find a way out. As for ›All Quiet‹, I know perfectly well that any one of us could just as well have written it. I had no doctrine to teach. I only wanted to tell what we encountered, how our ideas of life were ruined by reality.

»Himmelstoss, the corporal in the book, is not a figure of fancy. He really existed and was far worse than described. He is still alive and performing his job of postman.

»I am reproached for showing ›lack of soldierly spirit‹ – for being ›civilian.‹ But that is just what we remained, even if we did have to wear uniforms.

»On this point I can refer to the public success the book has had and the letters I have received from thousands who felt like myself. One letter, which alone makes me calm against such attacks, is from a man who lost his sight and who tells me that only through my book was he freed from the paralysing bitterness of his fate.

»I do not understand anything about politics. I dislike from the bottom of my heart the atmosphere of social hate now dominant in Germany. I hope the air elsewhere, where I expect goon to go, will be purer.«