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Success of Novel to Be Published by Courier-Post Defeated Purpose

First Chapter Due on Monday

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Editor's note: The Courier-Post begins publication Monday of »All Quiet on the Western Front,« the world's greatest war story. The story of a sensitive young German soldier in World War I, it is a powerful plea for peace as it reveals how the horrors of war in front-line fighting affect him and his young companions. It is really the story of the author, Erich Maria Remarque, in the war. Remarque, exiled by the Nazis because of his powerful anti-war books, recently arrived in America. In this interview he explains why and how he wrote his masterpiece.

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By Jane Franklin

Special to the Courier-Post

New York, Sept. 15. – Erich Maria Remarque wrote »All Quiet on the Western Front« so that he »might be through with the war forever.«

But the purge boomeranged. The book became a world-wide seller, sold over 1,000,000 copies in 29 languages. Now he is bound inescapably to the memories he wanted to escape.

»For the past few years I had been hoping that ›All Quiet‹ would give some encouragement toward achieving the great aim of humanity – peace – but it is apparent now I asked too much,« he said yesterday. A well-built man with intense, arresting eyes, Remarque arrived in New York last week from Switzerland, where he has lived for eight years. He was exiled from Germany.

Reticent About Self

The author is reticent about himself. He feels that all of himself that he wants to give to the world is in his books. He explained it –

»My only interest in this world is life, the fullest, finest, happiest living. War as I saw it was the negation of life. On the other hand, I am no idealist. I wrote ›All Quiet on the Western Front‹ because I had to. It was easy. We should be proud only of the things we do when we are not naturally prepared for them.

»A weak man who carries an injured person to safety, a caved-in fellow who develops into an athlete: they have something to be proud of.

»That's why I'm proud to be able to drive a car. I had a smashed knee, a stiff forearm, and a hand half-paralyzed. When I was taken on by an automobile company to test out cars, it was the proudest day of my life.

»I wrote ›All Quiet‹ to free myself from something I felt as a pressure, as a fetter. I am happiest when I can win the confidence of someone who has not shown confidence in the rest of the world. If we were to pass a yard with a nasty dog who growled even at the people who fed him, and I got him to wag his tail at me and lick my hand, that would be a real victory. It would be getting a little more out of life – and getting more out of life is the only reason for living.«

War Killed Dreams

Remarque's injuries are his physical souvenirs of the World War. Just as permanent are the mental scars, for the war killed every dream he had cherished before he enlisted at 16, one of the youngest soldiers in the German army.

While he lay in a hospital, his leg in a brace for months, the hands that he hoped would make him a concert pianist half paralyzed, his mother died, his best friend succumbed to tuberculosis, and his childhood sweetheart starved to death.

They told him he could go home, but he had no home but the Front. He went back to his comrades in the trenches and watched them die. The Armistice released him to a world empty of hope and love.

Few Lines Changed

»Then I decided to write the book,« he said. »I wrote every night for weeks. I was taking out of myself for myself, to save myself. I hardly altered a line. I wrote it down to be through with the war forever. Success defeated my purpose.«

Business hurried Remarque to Hollywood almost immediately on his arrival. Later he hopes to travel around the United States.

»I want to see America because I think this country is the salvation of the world. I have a great impression of President Roosevelt in his efforts for peace,« he said.

Remarque is a native of Westphalia, Germany, a descendant of French Catholic emigres who left their country during the revolution. His chief hobbies are breeding dogs, racing autos and collecting rugs. He is quite pleased that the Nazis thought his book sufficiently important to burn it in 1933.