

## STRATFORD'S RECTOR BACK FROM FRONT GIVES IMPRESSIONS OF WAR

He is young, and earnest, and very human, and he is the rector of Christ's church in Stratford – that venerable old edifice. His language is ruined forever, he says. It fairly sizzles now, and he really doesn't know whether he will ever be fit to be a "parson" again.

His language may sizzle, but his breadth of view, the serene look of charity and understanding in his earnest eyes, is a new gain.

He is the Reverend C. C. Kennedy, and he has just come back from the front, with "that look in his eyes" that they all get when they stay for months in that terrible and mysterious place, "The front line trenches."

"I'm not going to tell you about the work of a chaplain, because it really doesn't matter," said this remarkable person calmly puffing his clay pipe, "you just did what was to do and didn't have time to consider whether it was the "preacherly" thing to do or not. And the boys responded wonderfully."

Mr. Kennedy went across in December, 1917, with the 21<sup>st</sup> Engineers, light railroad engineers, the only regiment of its kind then in existence. Their duty was to put up the little collapsable [sic] railroad and run on it the almost toy cars that carried ammunitions and other supplies from the main road to the front. And because they were not a division in the ordinary sense of the word, they remained a fixture right on the firing line. In this way, as Mr. Kennedy calmly observes, he was fortunate enough to see the work of a great many of the American troops and also of the French. The French, he say [sic], are wonderful. They are remarkable fighters, and the kindest people in the world, especially to the Americans whom they seemed to idolize. The American boys won their hearts more by their love of children than in any other way. Every time a doughboy went to the village, he "simply swarmed with children," said Mr. Kennedy, and the French loved him for it.

### Acts As Interpreter.

Mr. Kennedy was practically the only one in his regiment who spoke French and so he acted as interpreter for them. On the fourth of July the village sent him a huge bouquet and thanks to the regiment for coming. His one leave of six days, eh spent with a French family.

This company – the 21<sup>st</sup> Engineers – was composed of men from every state in the Union except one, and there were men from South America, the Philippines, and many other places outside. They were practically first, so saw the others arrive. The first Americans that Mr. Kennedy saw fight were two regiments of negroes with the French troops. They did some wonderful fighting, too, he said. Then came the 26<sup>th</sup>, and the Rainbow division, later the draft divisions. He saw pretty much all of them, and he says that the Americans were great fighters, and he can't say too much for the 26<sup>th</sup>!

The Americans who arrived on the scene early have a healthy respect of Fritz as a fighter.

### "Busted" Morale.

"There's not a fellow who was over there who will be foolish enough to say that America won the war," he said, "what we did was to tip the scale when it was practically balanced. And it was the morale that broke among the Germans, not the man power."

As to the atrocities so often spoken of, Mr. Kennedy says that while he did not with his own eyes see any of them, he saw the results – the mutilated children and the returned English prisoners – and he thinks that while of course there was exaggeration, every atrocity told about, was pretty certainly committed once, at least.

"The big difference, as I see it," he explained, "between the Allies and the Germans, and not that the Allies never committed any outrages and the Germans, was not that the that [sic] it was the policy of those in authority to encourage it among the Germans, and the policy of the Allies to discourage it."

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I wanted to know about Paris and whether it was as wicked and moral destroying as some people have said.

"I have known Paris for a long time," answered the rector," and I can't see that it has ever been like that. Most of the dissipation so much spoken of concerned foreigners – not the Parisians – and during the war, there was very little drunkenness there. The French drink wine altogether, but always in moderation – they are naturally a moderate people. The English too, have improved wonderfully since regulating their liquor traffic. Their plan is not to prohibit the use of liquor, but to control the sale. It's a much better plan than ours. I never was a 'pro'" said this unusual minister.

Mr. Kennedy had a very great honor bestowed upon him in England, he preached on Victory Sunday in St. Mary's Oxford. This was a great concession for the British to make on such a very important Sunday.

On Thanksgiving day, he had an American service – the first one held in England for the American soldiers – at St. Marin's in the Field, London.

## A Tie That Binds

While at St. Mary's he learned of an incident that to him and his congregation was very interesting. It was in this church that Samuel Johnson was ordained a priest. Samuel Johnson was the first rector of [sic] also the first president of the Columbia University. That, of the Columbia University. That of course was many years ago, but it is an interesting occurrence that the present rector should be the first American to preach in St. Mary's.

"All Europe is looking to America to make the League of Nations a success," said Mr. Kennedy, "because we are the only ones with no string on us – the only ones who can go into it without being suspected of ulterior motives, of being tied up in European politics.

"Everybody in Europe knows that if the President had not gone over when he did, we would not have had peace this month nor many months to come. I was in Paris when President arrived. It was like nothing else in the world, that reception – and I was in London when he arrived there. That too, was a great time, but there's nothing like [sic] a Paris celebration."

"It will be a pity not to attempt the League," he said. "Of course it is full of errors – any human document is, but the idea is a good one and should at least be tried."

Then, when we were through talking, the Rector thought of something else.

"O," he said, "I must tell you about General Edwards. I saw him again and again. He was the kindest, humanist, best leader I ever saw. He went with his men into the thick of the fight as everybody knows, and often I have seen him stop and talk to a group of boys, asking questions about their [sic] comfort, finding out how they felt about things. In a few days, generally, there would come an order from headquarters, as a result of these talks, righting some wrong, or making some condition more bearable. A father he was, to all his men."

Lucky Christ Church! What a pity that the churches all over the dountry couldn't have sent their ministers "over there" to get their language sizzling and their hearts bigger and kinder, more human and charitable; their view point enlarged so that details and petty vexations fall naturally into their unimportant place, and the big things loom large because the man has seen into the hearts – the naked hearts – of men.