

Verbundkatalog Kalliope

To THE MESSAGE, Camp Crowder, Mo.

Mann, Klaus

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To THE MESSAGE, Camp Crowder, Mo.

Dear Message:

This is just a cordial "Hello" from an old friend and contributor -- now "somewhere in Italy." Camp Crowder and the editorial office of The Message seem incredibly far away -- just as the Mediterranean coast appeared fabulously distant when visualized from Missouri.

There is a nostalgic charm about distant places -- once familiar but now out of reach. From the magnificent (if somewhat damaged) Italian sceneries, my thoughts wander to the landscapes and faces I knew back in the States, but when I still was in Camp Crowder I kept thinking of Europe, and even wrote for The Message a series of wistful articles about European and North-African cities -- the cities of destiny, Cities in the News.

Since then I have had the opportunity of seeing some of those places again -- Tunis and Naples, for instance. So I was able to check up on my own descriptions. On the whole my reports proved fairly accurate -- except for certain details which I had not considered, or not known, when composing my stories. Of course, a place where you are stationed, in your capacity as a G.I., no longer is exactly ~~the~~ like the place you used to know as a leisurely civilian. Take the city of Tunis. I don't think that I exaggerated when raving, in my essay, ~~about the~~ about the colorful mysteries of the Arabian town. But I was unaware of the fact that the native districts are strictly off limits -- in Tunis as in all the other North-African cities. And had I known North Africa, at the time of my writing for The Message, as I know it today, I would certainly have included some anecdotes about the Arabian children, who are at times so delightful and at other times such a plague. The most ingenious, ~~most obstinate~~ little beggars and salesmen in the world, they stick doggedly to the Allied troops: however hard ~~hard~~ you may try to get rid of them -- they will follow you with the agility of monkeys and the obstinacy of flies.

All of them have picked up enough English to ask you for candy or cigarettes ("Smoke please! Give me bonbon, Joe!"), or to offer you a "nice shoe-shine." I shall never forget the little newsboy whom I saw somewhere between Casablanca and Algiers as he was running along the cars of a troop train -- crying at the top of his voice: "Stars and Stripes goddamnit...Stars and Stripes goddamnit..." And I shall always remember that funny little girl whom we used to call "dirty Gertie of Bizerte," because....

But I must not indulge in story-telling, as I know only too well that the editors of The Message have always too much copy and never enough printing space at their disposal. So I'd better stop -- just adding ~~my best regards~~ a lot of regards and wishes, which don't take up any room. Let me hear from Camp Crowder!

Yours,

K l a u s M a n n .