

WILLIAM LE QUEUX

GERMAN ATROCITIES. A
RECORD OF SHAMELESS
DEEDS

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Record of Shameless Deeds**

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Содержание

INTRODUCTION	7
I	10
II	11
III	13
IV	16
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	18

William le Queux

German Atrocities / A Record of Shameless Deeds

PREFACE

THIS fearful and disgraceful record of a Nation's shame and of an Emperor's complicity in atrocious crimes against God and man is no work of fiction, but a plain unvarnished statement of the grim and terrible work of the Kaiser's Huns of Attila which I have considered it a duty to lay before the British public.

Modern Germany, frothing with military Nietzscheism, seems to have returned to a primitive barbarism. Belgium, a peaceful modern nation, has been swept by fire and sword, and its honest, pious inhabitants tortured and massacred, not because the German soldiery desired to wreak such vengeance upon a people with whom they could have no quarrel, but because they had been encouraged "to act with unrelenting severity, to create examples which by their frightfulness would be a warning to the whole country."

The wild orgies of blood and debauchery, the atrocious outrages, murders, and mutilations, the ruthless violation and killing of defenceless women, girls, and children of tender age, have been, it is now admitted by the Germans themselves, carried out with their full knowledge, and even as part of the actual plan of campaign of their War-Lords.

Germany, though boasting of her culture, her refinement, her honest home-life, and the peaceful efforts of her Emperor, has for ever lost her place among civilized nations. It now stands revealed that when her diplomatic methods of base chicanery and lying fail then she does not hesitate to resort to acts so dastardly and inhuman as to have no parallel. Not only has she broken her most solemn treaties and moral engagements, but all the rules of civilized warfare to which she was a signatory at The Hague she has also violated, merely regarding them as "a scrap of paper."

Not content with resorting to every act of savagery and every refinement of cruelty which degenerated minds, filled with the blood-lust of war, could conceive, her troops, by order of her generals, have made a practice all along the line of placing before them innocent women and children to act as a living screen, in the hope that the Allies would not, from motives of humanity, fire upon them.

One cannot read a single page of this awful record – the German Black Book – without being thrilled with horror at unspeakable acts of civilized troops, who, at the behest of their Kaiser, and the exposed yet still ruling *camarilla* at Berlin, have become simply as the Huns of Attila.

The contents of this book are no hearsay stories, but hard facts officially recorded in *dossiers* in the French and Belgian Ministries of War, most of them, indeed, sworn statements taken before burgomasters, mayors, prefects, and magistrates. Even our brave fellows wounded in the Kaiser's savage attack upon Europe have brought back from the front similar narratives of the most appalling crimes. Evidence of German trickery and savagery we have, too, in our midst, for trains, sentries, and policemen have been shot at under cover of darkness by men who mean to emulate the methods of their compatriots.

The frightful deeds which have been done over the face of Belgium and in France are, no doubt, intended to be repeated in Great Britain, and, if it were possible, the Red Hand of Destruction would certainly be laid very heavy upon us – more heavily, perhaps, because we, by our honesty of purpose, have incurred the hatred of Kaiserdom.

I would bid all sufferers in Belgium and France to remember that when Attila of old came to Chalons, full of ostentation as the great War-Lord, he came to his own undoing, and his dominion at once disappeared to the winds. There is One with Whom vengeance lies for wrongs, and most assuredly will He mete out the same dread Fate of death and obscurity to the unblushing War-Lord of Germany, who, daily, with his blasphemous impiety, lifts his bloodstained hands and thanks his Maker for his shameful “successes.”

WILLIAM LE QUEUX.

INTRODUCTION

IT was a little over a month after the declaration of war that reports of great events began to crowd in upon us. Much had happened in that short space of time. The enormous forces of the Kaiser had forced back the line of the Allies well into France. We admired the huge machine at work. From a military point of view the rapidity of the advance of such an enormous body of men was something unique in warfare. It was not this wonderful achievement of the German army, however, it was not the equally wonderful resistance made by the Allies against overwhelming numbers, it was not the glorious record of Belgian, French, and British heroism – which resulted in practically nothing being gained by their adversary – it was none of these things that aroused and amazed the nations of the civilized world. It was something very different which arrested their horrified wonder, something which, in the words of the *Times*, “will turn the hand of every civilized nation in the world against them” (the German nation).

The atrocious acts committed by the troops of the Kaiser have staggered the civilized world, and it must now be plain to the meanest intelligence that these atrocities and acts of inhuman barbarity were not the doings of soldiers intoxicated with the excitement of success in battle, or maddened to the point of avenging defeat, or to be ascribed to an unbridled license of irresponsible troops out of hand. There is no longer any doubt, even in minds slow to believe them, that deeds which bring the blush of shame to the cheek as we read of them have been perpetrated; there is as little doubt where the responsibility for them rests. It is with the Kaiser and the men around him.

Plain Speaking

“Until now we have maintained an attitude of deliberate reserve upon the innumerable stories of German atrocities which have reached us,” says the *Times*. “We published without comment the unanswerable list of shocking excesses committed by the German troops, which was sent to England by the Belgian authorities. When a German Zeppelin cast bombs upon ill-fated women asleep in their beds at Antwerp, we did no more than explain the bearings of international law upon conduct which has met with universal reprobation in Europe and America. But now the real object of German savagery is self-revealed, not only by the effacement of Louvain, but by the shameful admissions sent forth from the wireless station at Berlin. On Thursday night the following official notification regarding Belgium came vibrating through the air: —

“‘The only means of preventing surprise attacks from the civil population has been to interfere with unrelenting severity and to create examples which by their frightfulness would be a warning to the whole country.’

“Such is the cynical nature of the German apologia for the destruction of Louvain. Such is the character of the warfare of the modern Huns. They seek to strike terror into the hearts of their foes by methods which belong to the days of the old barbaric hosts, who were thought to have vanished from the world for ever.

“There must be no mistake about the apportionment of blame for this and numberless other crimes. We have listened too long to the bleatings of professors bemused by the false glamour of a philosophy which the Germans themselves have thrust aside. The Kaiser and his people are alike responsible for the acts of their Government and their troops, and there can be no differentiation when the day of reckoning comes.

“The Kaiser could stop these things with a word. Instead, he pronounces impious benedictions upon them. Daily he appeals for the blessing of God upon the dreadful deeds which are staining the face of Western Europe – the ravaged villages, the hapless non-combatants hanged or shot, the

women and children torn from their beds by cowards and made to walk before them under fire, all the infamies which have eternally disgraced German 'valour.' We are no longer dependent upon hearsay for these stories. Our own men are bringing them back from the front. Let there be no mistake as to where the responsibility rests."

What the Kaiser Said

It was the Kaiser (addressing his troops in June, 1900, on their setting out for Peking) who said: —

"When you meet the foe you will defeat him. No quarter will be given, no prisoners will be taken. Let all who fall into your hands be at your mercy. Gain a reputation like the Huns under Attila."

And Who Was Attila?

It is worth while to recall the methods of this savage, for he was nothing better. In one expedition across Greece and in another across Italy he reduced seventy of the finest cities to smoking ruins and to shambles. The inhabitants were either slaughtered on the spot or marched away in chains to end their lives as slaves. Men, women, children, babies – all came alike to this black demon of outrage and destruction. Briefly, the Monarch of the Huns may be best described as the worthy leader of one vast gang of Jack the Rippers.

And this is the blood-guilty ruffian whom the Kaiser now holds up as his exemplar! Judging by Louvain, he is no unworthy follower of his Master.

Then was it not **Bismarck** who said: —

"You must leave the people through whom you march only their eyes to weep with."

It was also the Kaiser who said, addressing his soldiers, "You must only have one will, and it is mine; there is only one law, and it is mine."

And then again, I repeat, it was a Berlin wireless that flashed the official message: —

"The only means of preventing surprise attacks from the civil population has been to interfere with unrelenting severity and to create examples which by their frightfulness would be a warning to the whole country."

Need we seek further to fix the responsibility?

War Rights

What are the rights of nations in a state of war? There are first of all the unwritten laws of nations and humanity which need, or should need, no defining amongst civilized peoples. There are also the definite and specific Acts laid down at The Hague Convention, which it was declared by the signatories would not be legitimate in war between civilized nations. Germany was a signatory to The Hague Convention. At this Convention the Powers limited the rights of belligerents in the means to be adopted of injuring the enemy. Here are some of them: —

By Article XXIII. it was especially forbidden: —

"To kill or wound treacherously individuals belonging to the hostile nation or army.

"To kill or wound an enemy who, having laid down his arms, or having no longer means of defence, has surrendered at discretion.

"To declare that no quarter will be given.

"To employ arms, projectiles, or material calculated to cause unnecessary suffering.

“To make improper use of a flag of truce, of the national flag, or of the military insignia and uniform of the enemy, as well as the distinctive badges of the Geneva Convention.

“To destroy or seize the enemy’s property, unless such destruction or seizure be imperatively demanded by the necessities of war.”

The law of civilized warfare was further made plain as follows: —

Article XXV.: “The attack or bombardment, by whatever means, of towns, villages, dwellings, or buildings which are undefended, is prohibited.”

Article XXVI.: “The officer in command of an attacking force must, before commencing a bombardment, except in cases of assault, do all in his power to warn the authority.”

Article XXVII.: “In sieges and bombardments all necessary steps must be taken to spare as far as possible buildings dedicated to religion, art, science, or charitable purposes, historic monuments, hospitals, and places where the sick and wounded are collected, provided they are not being used at the time for military purposes. It is the duty of the besieged to indicate the presence of such buildings or places by distinctive and visible signs which shall be notified to the enemy beforehand.”

In other further Articles it was laid down that a belligerent is forbidden to force the inhabitants of territory occupied by him to furnish information about the army of the other belligerent, or about its means of defence. It was forbidden to confiscate private property, and also laid down that family honour and rights, the lives of persons, and private property, as well as religious convictions and practice, must be respected. Pillage was forbidden, and prisoners must be humanely treated.

Uncivilized Warfare

Stories of German brutality and ruthless disregard of these rules of civilized warfare as set out above were, from the opening of the war, continually reaching England. At first the public were sceptical about such tales of horror. Unfortunately, however, it was too clearly seen that the Germans made war in a manner which was very far from being civilized. Atrocities were being committed with a definite object – an object which was self-revealed, not only by the effacement of Louvain, “a shameless holocaust of irreparable treasures lit up by blind barbarian vengeance,” but by the disgraceful admissions sent forth from the German wireless station which I have already quoted.

The character of the warfare of these modern Huns was to terrorize the inhabitants of a hostile country, so that the invader might proceed on his way without fear of molestation. Therefore, the unspeakable crimes of the Kaiser’s forces have not even the excuse of being outbursts of national savagery. The shameful record contained in these pages are the cold and calculated brutalities of a nation who boasted of its “culture,” whose prayerful Emperor held up his hands to his Maker invoking success for his horde of ruthless barbarians, but who has shown that in war he respects no law of God, and regards the solemn treaties of nations as “scraps of paper.”

“We can only pray for a hastening of the day when all that is best in the German people will reassert itself as of old, and when the long reign of an arrogant and ruthless military caste will be looked back to by the countrymen of Schiller and Goethe as a nightmare that never can return.”

– *From the American Nation.*

I

Article XXIII. of The Hague Convention forbids: – “To kill or wound treacherously individuals belonging to the hostile nation or army.”

From almost the first day of the war this undertaking, given by Germany along with the other Great Powers, has been treated by her as a “scrap of paper.”

The fearful deeds of horror which have besmirched the name of Germany form a terrible page of history. They have been proved by captured Germans themselves to have been deliberate, and to have been actually ordered by officers as high in rank as colonels and majors, and to be part of the Kaiser’s preconceived plan. The murder of unarmed, inoffensive citizens, the hussar-like stroke of sowing neutral waters with death, the destruction of unfortified towns and the massacre of their inhabitants, the violation of women and young girls, the forcing of men, women, and children to march as shields in front of their troops, the murder of the wounded, the wholesale slaughter of non-combatants, the tortures, the mutilations, and the vile outrages are surely sins against humanity, and are bound to meet with an awful and just retribution. The blood of those martyred innocents cries aloud to God for vengeance, and such vengeance must surely come upon the Kaiser and the inhuman monsters surrounding him who have so deliberately urged on their wild assassins to commit the unspeakable crimes reported during the first month of the war.

It must be remembered, in reading of these terrible atrocities, that while they were being committed on the defenceless on every hand, yet the Kaiser sent a telegram to the King of Württemberg actually thanking the Almighty for the success of his marauders in their murderous campaign against women and children. The text of the Kaiser’s message was: “With God’s gracious assistance, Duke Albrecht and his splendid army have gained a glorious victory. You will join me in thanking the Almighty. I have bestowed on Albrecht the Iron Cross of the First and Second Class. – Wilhelm.” God’s gracious assistance!

The ruthless and utterly inexcusable barbarities committed by the German army were surely without parallel in the whole history of the world. The spectacle of racial degeneration which Germany displayed staggered civilization, and this awful story of murder, cruelty, and debauchery will surely remain for all time as a record of infamies which have eternally disgraced the German nation. About the apportionment of blame there must be no mistake. The Kaiser could have prevented it by a single word. But, condemned by his own speech, he and his people are alike responsible for the acts of the troops, and no differentiation can be made by right-thinking people.

II

My Interview with Belgian Ministers of State

In order that the civilized world should be acquainted with the terrible atrocities committed in Belgium, the King of the Belgians, who had served in the trenches with his men, disguised as a private soldier, appointed a Mission to proceed to the President of the United States and lay the case before him. The members of the Mission were: —

M. Carton de Wiart, Chief of the Mission, who is the Belgian Minister of Justice;

M. de Sadeleer, Leader of the Conservative Party;

M. Pau Hemans, Leader of the Liberal Party;

M. Emile Van der Velde, Leader of the Socialist Party.

All these men are Belgian Ministers of State, and were accompanied by Count de Lichtervelde, who acted as Secretary to the Mission.

The members of this Mission first came to London to present an Address to the King. On the evening of the day these gentlemen were received by His Majesty, and later by Sir Edward Grey, I had the privilege of a private interview with them.

I had a long talk with M. Carton de Wiart, during which he unfolded to me many frightful details, and

“These abominable crimes against humanity and civilization call for condign reprobation in the face of the civilized world... Let us hear no more whining about German ‘culture.’ But let us make it known that we will make the world ring with our sense of horror.” —*Frederic Harrison.*

explained the reason for the appointment of a committee of inquiry. He described to me scenes he himself had witnessed. He laid stress upon the bombardment and destruction of open towns – that is, towns unprotected and undefended by any military works – such as Malines and Louvain; while Antwerp, being a fortified place, ought to have had twenty-four hours’ notice given to its inhabitants before it was attacked with bombs, yet no such notice was given. On the contrary, attacks by Zeppelins had been made without warning in the dead of night. He also described to me the atrocities committed by the Germans in the bombardment and setting fire to small villages without any military reason or necessity whatever. He related harrowing details of the massacre of perfectly innocent people, non-combatants, men, women, and children.

He showed me a letter from a person of repute in Belgium who had motored from Brussels to Louvain by the Tervueren road, in which I read: “After I got to a village named Veerde St. George I saw only burning villages; peasants beside themselves with terror threw up their arms in sign of submission on my approach. When I got to Louvain I found the whole town in ruins, and soldiers were still piling straw against buildings which had escaped the flames and igniting them.”

Authenticated Documents

The mass of documents which the Mission were carrying to America, he informed me, were all signed statements of persons who had been eye-witnesses of the atrocities, as well as those of many who had suffered.

In a chat I also had with M. Emile Van der Velde, another member of the Delegation and the leader of the Belgian Socialists, he said: “I went to Malines after the fighting, in order to investigate

the state of affairs. I found only eight Belgian people in the town, but even then the Germans were bombarding the deserted houses, apparently with the sole object of destroying them. The whole object of the Germans,” he added, “had been to create such a reign of terror that the whole population of Belgium should flee into Antwerp, and so render it impossible for the people congregated there to be fed. I myself examined the bodies of a peasant and his son which had been cut to pieces by bayonet thrusts.”

Another member of the Delegation told me that he had learned from several wounded persons how a druggist living near Tirlemont, on refusing to act as guide to the Uhlans, was shot three times and then bayoneted; and further, in the same hospital, wounded soldiers had told him how that while lying upon the battlefield many had been bayoneted or shot.

The Delegation had, earlier in the day on which I had this interview with them, presented an Address to His Majesty at Buckingham Palace, the text of which has been published. It ran: —

“Sire, – Belgium, having had to choose between the sacrifice of her honour and the peril of war, did not hesitate. She opposed the brutal aggression committed by a Power which was one of the guarantors of her neutrality.

“In this critical situation it was for our country an inestimable tower of strength to see coming forth the resolute and immediate intervention by great and powerful England.

“Commissioned by His Majesty the King of the Belgians with a Mission to the President of the United States, we have considered it to be our duty to make a stay in the capital of the British Empire to convey to your Majesty the respectful and ardent expression of gratitude of the Belgian nation...

“Our adversary, after invading our territory, has decimated the civil population, massacred women and children, carried into captivity inoffensive peasants, put to death wounded, destroyed undefended towns, burned churches, historical monuments, and the famous library of the University of Louvain. All these facts are established by authenticated documents. Each we shall have the honour of submitting to the Government of your Majesty.

“In spite of all this suffering in Belgium, which has been made the personification of outraged right, the country is resolute in fulfilling to the utmost her duties towards Europe. Whatever may happen, she must defend her existence, her honour, and her liberty.”

The King, in reply, said that he would support Belgium, and expressed his horror at the shocking report of German brutality.

The Belgian Minister's Statements

The delegation was subsequently received by Sir Edward Grey at the Foreign Office, where they outlined some of the violations of international law and of humanity committed by Germany, viz.: —

1. Violation of Belgium's neutrality.
2. Taking of several millions of francs from the private National Bank at Liège and Hasselt.
3. Bombardment of the open towns of Louvain and Malines and the bombardment of Antwerp at night by airship without the twenty-four hours' notice due in international law to the inhabitants of a fortified town.
4. Bombardment and burning of villages and the massacre of non-combatant inhabitants, including women and children.

III

Our own Press Bureau issued on the 25th August the following statement to the English Press: —

“The Belgian Minister has made the following statement: —

“In spite of solemn assurances of good will and long-standing treaty obligations, Germany has made a sudden savage and utterly unwarranted attack on Belgium.

“However sorely pressed she may be, Belgium will never fight unfairly and never stoop to infringe the laws and customs of legitimate warfare. She is putting up a brave fight against overwhelming odds; she may be beaten, she may be crushed, but, to quote our noble King’s words, ‘She will never be enslaved.’

“When German troops invaded our country, the Belgian Government issued public statements, which were placarded in every town, village, and hamlet, warning all civilians to abstain scrupulously from hostile acts against the enemy’s troops. The Belgian Press daily published similar notices broadcast through the land. Nevertheless, the German authorities have issued lately statements containing grave imputations against the attitude of the Belgian civilian population, threatening us at the same time with dire reprisals. These imputations are contrary to the real facts of the case, and as to threats of further vengeance, no menace of odious reprisals on the part of the German troops will deter the Belgian Government from protesting before the civilized world against the fearful and atrocious crimes committed wilfully and deliberately by the invading hosts against helpless non-combatants, old men, women, and children.

“Long is the list of outrages committed by the German troops and appalling the details of atrocities, as vouched for by the Committee of Inquiry recently formed by the Belgian Minister of Justice and presided over by him. This committee comprises the highest judicial and University authorities of Belgium, such as Chief Justice Van Iseghem, Judge Nys, Professors Cottier, Wodon, etc.

“The following instances and particulars have been established by careful investigations, based in each case on the evidence of reliable eye-witnesses: —

“German cavalry occupying the village of Linsmeau were attacked by some Belgian infantry and two gendarmes. A German officer was killed by our troops during the fight and subsequently buried at the request of the Belgian officer in command. No one of the civilian population took part in the fighting at Linsmeau. Nevertheless, the village was invaded at dusk on August 10th by a strong force of German cavalry, artillery, and machine guns.

“In spite of the formal assurances given by the Burgomaster of Linsmeau that none of the peasants had taken part in the previous fight, two farms and six outlying houses were destroyed by gun fire and burnt. All the male inhabitants were then compelled to come forward and hand over whatever arms they possessed. No recently discharged firearms were found.

“Nevertheless, the invaders divided these peasants into three groups; those in one group were bound, and eleven of them placed in a ditch, where they were afterwards found dead, their skulls fractured by the butts of German rifles.

“During the night of August 10th German cavalry entered Velm in great numbers. The inhabitants were asleep. The Germans, without provocation, fired on M. Deglimme Gevers’ house, broke into it, destroyed furniture, looted money, burnt barns, hay and corn stacks, farm implements, six oxen, and the contents of the farmyard. They carried off Mrs. Deglimme, half naked, to a place two miles away. She was then let go, and was fired upon as she fled, without

being hit. Her husband was carried away in another direction and fired upon. He is dying. The same troops sacked and burned the house of a railway watchman.

“Farmer Jef Dierick, of Neerhespen, bears witness to the following acts of cruelty committed by German cavalry at Orsmael and Neerhespen on August 10th, 11th, and 12th: —

“An old man of the latter village had his arm sliced in three longitudinal cuts; he was then hanged head downwards and burned alive. Young girls have been raped and little children outraged at Orsmael, where several inhabitants suffered mutilations too horrible to describe. A Belgian soldier belonging to a battalion of cyclist carabinieri, who had been wounded and made prisoner, was hanged; whilst another, who was tending his comrade, was bound to a telegraph pole on the St. Trond road and shot.

“On Wednesday, August 12th, after an engagement at Haelen, Commandant Van Damme, so severely wounded that he was lying prone on his back, was finally murdered by German infantrymen firing their revolvers into his mouth.

“On Monday, August 10th, at Orsmael, the Germans picked up Commandant Knapen, very seriously wounded, propped him up against a tree, and shot him. Finally they hacked his corpse with swords.

“In different places, notably at Hollogue sur Geer, Barchon, Pontisse, Haelen, and Zelck, German troops have fired on doctors, ambulance bearers, ambulances, and ambulance wagons carrying the Red Cross.

“At Boncelles a body of German troops marched into battle carrying a Belgian flag.

WHY THE GERMANS COMMIT ATROCITIES

“True strategy consists in hitting your enemy, and hitting him hard. Above all you must inflict on the inhabitants of invaded towns the maximum of suffering, so that they may become sick of the struggle and may bring pressure to bear on their Government to discontinue it. You must leave the people through whom you march only their eyes to weep with.

“In every case the principle which guided our general was that war must be made terrible to the civil population, so that it may sue for peace.”

BISMARCK.

“On Thursday, August 6th, before a fort at Liége, German soldiers continued to fire on a party of Belgian soldiers (who were unarmed, and had been surrounded while digging a trench) after these had hoisted the white flag.

“On the same day, at Vottem, near the fort of Loncin, a group of German infantry hoisted the white flag. When Belgian soldiers approached to take them prisoners the Germans suddenly opened fire on them at close range.

“Harrowing reports of German savagery at Aerschot have reached the Belgian Government at Antwerp from official local sources. Thus on Tuesday, August 18th, the Belgian troops occupying a position in front of Aerschot received orders to retire without engaging the enemy. A small force was left behind to cover the retreat. This force resisted valiantly against overwhelming German forces, and inflicted serious losses on them. Meanwhile, practically the whole civilian population of Aerschot, terrorized by the atrocities committed by the Germans in the neighbouring villages, had fled from the town.

“Next day, Wednesday, August 19th, German troops entered Aerschot, without a shot having been fired from the town and without any resistance whatever having been made. The few inhabitants that remained had closed their doors and windows in compliance with the general orders issued by

the Belgian Government. Nevertheless, the Germans broke into the houses and told the inhabitants to quit.

“In one single street the first six male inhabitants who crossed their thresholds were seized and shot at once, under the very eyes of their wives and children.

“The German troops then retired for the day, only to return in greater numbers on the next day, Thursday, August 20th.

“They then compelled the inhabitants to leave their houses and marched them to a place two hundred yards from the town. There, without more ado, they shot M. Thielemans, the Burgomaster, his fifteen-year-old son, the clerk of the local judicial board, and ten prominent citizens. They then set fire to the town and destroyed it.

“The following statement was made by Commandant Georges Gilson, of the 9th Infantry of the Line, now lying in hospital at Antwerp: —

“I was told to cover the retreat of our troops in front of Aerschot. During the action fought there on Wednesday, August 19th, between six and eight o’clock in the morning, suddenly I saw on the high road, between the German and Belgian forces, which were fighting at close range, a group of four women, with babies in their arms, and two little girls clinging to their skirts. Our men stopped firing till the women got through our lines, but the German machine guns went on firing all the time, and one of the women was wounded in the arm.

“These women could not have got through the neighbouring German lines and been on the high road unless with the consent of the enemy.

“All the evidence and circumstances seem to point to the fact that these women had been deliberately pushed forward by the Germans to act as a shield for their advance guard, and in the hope that the Belgians would cease firing for fear of killing the women and children.

“This statement was made and duly certified in the Antwerp hospital on August 22nd by Commandant Gilson in the presence of the Chevalier Ernst N. Bunswyck, Chief Secretary to the Belgian Minister of Justice, and M. de Cartier de Marchienne, Belgian Minister to China.

“Further German atrocities were continuously being brought to notice and made the subject of official and expert inquiry by the proper authorities.

“In publishing the above statements the only comment the Press Bureau can offer is, that these atrocities appear to be committed in villages and throughout the countryside with the deliberate intention of terrorizing the people, and so making it unnecessary to leave troops in occupation of small places, or to protect lines of communication. *In larger places, like Brussels, where the diplomatic representatives of neutral Powers are eye-witnesses, there appear to have been no excesses.*”

Such was the document issued by the Press Bureau. I have quoted it word for word (emphasizing only in italics or in heavy type certain passages).

PRIMITIVE SAVAGERY

“Their utter contempt for the established usages of international intercourse, and even for the ordinary decencies of life, was displayed in their brutal treatment of the French and Russian Ambassadors, in the stripping naked of the wives of Russian officials, in the atrocities they have since committed in Belgium, in their seizure of hostages, in their homicidal mine-laying in the North Sea. In all these matters one seems to discern a sudden lapse into primitive savagery.”

— *Dr. Dillon in the Contemporary Review.*

IV

The following is the second report issued by the Belgian Commission of Inquiry, and which was published by the British Official Press Bureau on September 15th, 1914.

Second Report of the Belgian Committee of Inquiry

To M. Carton de Wiart, Minister of Justice, Antwerp.

Sir, – The Commission of Inquiry has the honour to make the following report on acts of which the town of Louvain, the neighbourhood, and the district of Malines have been the scene.

The German Army entered Louvain on Wednesday, August 19th, after having burned down the villages through which it had passed.

As soon as they had entered the town of Louvain the Germans requisitioned food and lodging for their troops. They went to all the banks of the town and took possession of the cash in hand. German soldiers burst open the doors of houses which had been abandoned by their inhabitants, pillaged them, and committed other excesses.

The German authorities took as hostages the mayor of the city, Senator Van der Kelen, the Vice-Rector of the Catholic University, and the senior priest of the city, besides certain magistrates and aldermen. All the weapons possessed by the inhabitants, even fencing swords, had already been given up to the municipal authorities and placed by them in the Church of St. Pierre.

In a neighbouring village, Corbeek Loo, on Wednesday, August 19th, a young woman, aged twenty-two, whose husband was with the Army, and some of her relations, were surprised by a band of German soldiers. The persons who were with her were locked up in a deserted house, while she herself was dragged into another cottage, where she was assaulted by five soldiers.

Fate of 16-year-old Girl.

In the same village on Thursday, August 20, German soldiers fetched from their house a young girl, about sixteen years old, and her parents. They conducted them to a small deserted country house, and while some of them held back the father and mother, others entered the house, and, finding the cellar open, forced the girl to drink. They then brought her on to the lawn in front of the house and assaulted her. Finally they stabbed her in the breast with their bayonets.

When this young girl had been abandoned by them after these abominable deeds, she was brought back to her parents' house, and the following day, in view of the gravity of her condition, she received extreme unction from the parish priest and was taken to the hospital of Louvain, as her life was despaired of.

On August 24 and 25 Belgian troops made a sortie from the entrenched camp of Antwerp and attacked the German army before Malines. The Germans were thrown back on Louvain and Vilvorde.

On entering the villages which had been occupied by the enemy the Belgian army found them devastated. The Germans, as they retired, had pillaged and burnt the villages, taking with them the male inhabitants, whom they forced to march in front of them.

Belgian soldiers entering Hofstade on August 25 found the body of an old woman who had been killed by bayonet thrusts. She still held in her hand the needle with which she was sewing when she was killed. A woman and her fifteen or sixteen year old son lay on the ground, pierced by bayonets. A man had been hanged.

At Sempst, a neighbouring village, were found the bodies of two men partially carbonised. One of them had his legs cut off at the knees; the other had the arms and legs cut off. A workman, whose burnt body has been seen by several witnesses, had been struck several times with bayonets, and then,

while still alive, the Germans had poured petroleum over him and thrown him into a house to which they set fire. A woman who came out of her house was killed in the same way.

A witness, whose evidence has been taken by a reliable British subject, declares that he saw, on August 26, not far from Malines, during the last Belgian attack, an old man tied by the arms to one of the rafters in the ceiling of his farm. The body was completely carbonised, but the head, arms, and feet were unburnt. Further on, a child of about fifteen was tied up, the hands behind the back, and the body was completely torn open with bayonet wounds. Numerous corpses of peasants lay on the ground in positions of supplication, their arms lifted and their hands clasped.

Facts about Louvain.

At nightfall on August 26 the German troops, repulsed by our soldiers, entered Louvain panic-stricken. Several witnesses affirm that the German garrison which occupied Louvain was erroneously informed that the enemy were entering the town. Men of the garrison immediately marched to the station, shooting haphazard the while, and there met the German troops who had been repulsed by the Belgians, the latter having just ceased the pursuit.

Everything tends to prove that the German regiments fired on one another. At once the Germans began bombarding the town, pretending that civilians had fired on the troops, a suggestion which is contradicted by all the witnesses, and could scarcely have been possible, because the inhabitants of Louvain had had to give up their arms to the municipal authorities several days before.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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