In the Prison City Brussels, 1914-1918 / A Personal Narrative

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IN THE PRISON CITY BRUSSELS, 1914-1918

A Personal Narrative

BY

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AUTHOR OF
"THE HIGHER LAW" "ET TU SEGANE" ETC.

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TO

C. H. M.

THE "COMPANION" WHOSE CARE AND SYMPATHY
GREATLY LIGHTENED THE DARK YEARS FOR ME,
AND COMFORTED THE LIVES OF SO MANY SUFFERERS,

THIS VOLUME IS, WITH DEVOTED AFFECTION,
GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

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PREFACE

T

THESE reminiscences of prison years in Brussels, during the entire German occupation, aim merely at giving an accurate account of the city's moral atmosphere, and of certain events which came to me first-hand and have not yet been recorded. Only indubitable facts are related, while many of, perhaps, greater and more tragic interest, already made public, or reaching me through roundabout channels, have been omitted.

This slight record, which, in great part, lay for many months buried under Belgian soil, to escape German inquisition, may appear an unnecessary addition to the volumes of more important matter already produced by the war. But as the United States, after long-forgiving delay, entered the conflict heart and soul—as England, the land of my forefathers both paternal and maternal, performed

very miracles and risked her all for a cause so great—it seems my duty, as that of every eye-witness, to give all positive evidence possible, to those who must bear the consequent taxation, that the cause was worthy of the vast sacrifices it demanded.

J. H. T., Jr.

"See with what heat these dogs of Hell advance

To waste and havoc yonder world, which I

So fair and good created!"

Paradise Lost.

IN THE PRISON CITY

I

¨T

"THANK Heaven we are in a sane country at last!" was my thought when, after struggling as best we could through terror-stricken France, my companion and I crossed the Belgian frontier early in August 1914.

Such was the impression made by the calm confidence of a people already meeting the German forces at the point where their inadequately fortified boundaries had been treacherously attacked. The impression may have been partly due to contrast with some days amid the wild confusion and panic of Paris, where, almost devoid of funds (since all letters of credit were valueless), we had existed, with several other stranded travellers, on the charity, or rather faith, of a prominent hotel proprietor. During that never-to-be-forgotten sojourn in the famous capital, we had witnessed something resembling the frenzied excitement of revolution days. The entire population, expecting a repetition of the horrors of 1870, was in a fever of alarm; distraction and tumult reigned on every side. Streets rang night and day with the hysterical cries of newsvendors announcing some unlooked-for lightning flash through the cloud of storm rapidly spreading darkness over the world; echoed to the ceaseless tramp of troops hurrying to the front, and with the shrieks and howls of applause raised by half-maddened crowds thronging the thoroughfares.

Lightning alone can symbolize the rapid shocks that reached us, almost hourly, during those first days. But, as these events are well known, and their recital not an object of this account, they may be left to the more able hands now,

doubtless, engaged in presenting them as each writer deems advantageous to his own nation.

Paris, representing the dazed and horrified condition of the whole war-stricken country, indeed appeared mad at that time. "*C'est la guerre!*" was the explanation of every eccentric act; every scarcity; every failure to carry on business. All classes were in the streets, gesticulating, arguing, or shouting wildly to the hastily-mustered troops marching, gay and confident, toward a hell of horrors no one then could even picture. "*C'est la guerre!*" came with dogged bitterness from the lips of mothers, in whose eyes still lingered the tears through which they had smiled farewell to sons they would never see again—from the man behind the counter who absent-mindedly regretted that he had not some article asked for, until it was pointed out to him, in his stock, by a persistent client.

To the French "*La Guerre*" meant the pitiless monster of Bismarck's time, whose awful shadow still darkened the minds which could remember Germany's last subtly-planned and opportune onslaught. Although later on, as all the world knows, France faced the situation with admirable courage and a wonderful spirit of self-sacrifice and determination, at that time her people appeared distraught by a calamity too little provided against, and too appallingly suggestive of disaster to be contemplated with the calm and faith quickly developed after the great Marne victory.

That first awful period of consternation eloquently revealed how little France had premeditated conflict with her neighbour, and makes the ever-glorious and miraculous resistance of her and England's armies, against Germany's superior forces and perfected equipment, stand out as the one astounding marvel of the war.

When my companion and I were startled, while on a holiday expedition in the French Alps, by the tocsin's ominous tolling, we were as dazed as were all others in the quiet Alpine hamlet so abruptly shaken from its world-ignoring calm.

To us, descending from the eternal peace of snow-clad peaks, knowing nothing of the menace that so rapidly rushed the mightiest of nations into conflict such as the world has never before known, the scene of despair awakened by that summons was inexpressibly affecting. We had left the village in all the joy and prosperity of its gladdest season, and returned to find its streets thronged with weeping and frenzied women, neglected children, and pale-faced men, too stunned for speech.

It was as though some inexplicable cataclysm had struck the place, turning a sane community mad; for at first the significance of that slowly tolling bell was not clear to us. The appalling truth, however, became quickly known, and we, with other aliens, were obliged, if not provided with a *permis de séjour*, to leave the locality within twelve hours and fly from France.

The journey to Paris of twenty-eight hours, side-tracked and shut up as we were in a suffocatingly overcrowded carriage, without food or water, was an experience

not likely to be forgotten by anyone who suffered it. It served as a preface to war; a preface which, save for the lack of bloodshed, contained all the moral miseries of battle—struggle, menace, suffering, and even the proximity of death, for several children and women nearly perished of thirst and suffocation.

As the Paris banks were also closed to foreign credit, we arrived there to find no means of increasing our funds in hand—only sufficient to cover the journey back to Brussels (our place of residence), whither, after a much-needed night of repose, we expected to continue our journey the following morning. But "*La Guerre*" willed otherwise! All trains being monopolized for the transfer of troops, we, with several American millionaires and other foreigners, were forced to exist on trust, for a period that appeared indefinite, within the palatial walls of the Grand Hotel.

Looking down from the safe enclosure of windows upon the dark tides of passion and sorrow surging in the streets, it was comical, as well as perplexing, to hear the discourse of these pampered darlings of Fortune who, as yet, had no vaguest idea of war's true meaning, and seemed to look upon the surrounding agitation as little more than a characteristic of excitable France. There was no definite anxiety shown as to the possible consequences of the outbreak. Its world-encircling terrors could only be foreseen by those who understood the length and breadth of Germany's ambitions. To the Americans present it meant only a brief European conflict, to which they and their country were in no way related and from which they were anxious to fly with all possible speed. Some remarks there uttered in facetious ignorance of the moment's real gravity recur to me now in strange contrast to the heartfelt intensity of America's later sympathy, and her slowly accumulating resentment toward the Powers that made war more a shame to humanity than ever before in history.

"If this imprisonment goes on much longer, I really don't know what I shall do!" exclaimed the wife of a wealthy New York banker one day as we sat in the sumptuous hotel drawing-room listening to the outer roar; "I have only three francs and twenty centimes between me and death!"

This tragic announcement, from a woman noted for her opulence, was spoken with a mock gravity that called forth general laughter.

"Well, *I* have just seventy-five centimes!" retorted another equally wealthy dame. "If you will advance me one-fifty, I shall give you a hundred per cent interest when we reach the land of liberty!"

"If we ever *do* reach it!" was the joking reply. "No, dear lady, it is far too dubious! I imagine we are here to stay until the Germans are beaten!"

"Good gracious! don't suggest such a thing!" exclaimed another. "That would be *too* appalling!"

"Oh, it will not be so long! If England comes in, we shall see the end of war in a few weeks!"

"England! Don't lay your hopes there—England will never come in!"

"She certainly will," ejaculated the first speaker. "My husband says if Belgium is violated, England will certainly have a hand in the wicked business."

"Germany is not likely to be so rash as to violate Belgium's neutrality," remarked a man present; "but if she does, God help France!"

"*And* England!" muttered another.

"Well, all I know," asserted one of the women, "is that Mr. F.—and being a diplomat, he ought to know!—told me this morning it would be folly for England to become embroiled. She isn't prepared, and she has no army."

"She has a navy!"

"What use would a navy be against an inland country?" scornfully retorted one of the women; then, as though weary of the folly of her sex, turned to a man who had not yet spoken and asked: "What do *you* think?"

He shrugged and replied rather disconsolately: "My dear lady, the whole affair is too far beyond my comprehension for me to form any opinion about it. Civilization has been dealt a blow that leaves feeble intellects, like mine, too dazed to think!"

"But do you think England will come in?" persisted his questioner.

"She may and she may not," was the unsatisfactory reply. "I fail to see what she can accomplish, in her present condition, if she does."

"Oh, she could be of great use!" exclaimed the banker's wife. "She could patrol us across the briny deep, and that is all I care about at present! Dear me! if only our cars had not been requisitioned, we might all have been on the sea by now! I do think it rather an imposition to take what belongs to neutrals!"

"They probably never asked to whom the cars belonged," returned the man. "At a time like this, when every moment lost counts against them, every vehicle for transporting troops is too urgently needed."

"Oh, I suppose so!" the woman sighed, "but I just wish I had not left mine in Paris. They might have had it and welcome, if they had allowed me to get out first!"

"I can't understand why *one* train for foreigners can't be run through to Calais," complained another. "There is no *system*—that is the trouble!"

"System!" echoed the man. "How can there be system, in regard to strangers, when the country is shaken as by an earthquake? The most powerful military strength in the world, enhanced by all the devices and war-machinery perfected by half a century of study and preparation, is rushing to overwhelm her unsuspecting and unready forces! What is your discomfort, or mine, or that of any individual, when compared to the almost inevitable ruin threatening France? We can only

wait and be patient. Our trials are as nothing in comparison to what every native of this country is now suffering."

This silenced complaints, and the very typical conversation took a more serious tone. Not one of us really understood the full gravity of the catastrophe. It was too sudden and inexplicable. The sentiments prevailing in Paris, at that time, were scarcely wiser than ours; save that former experience—the trials of a war still remembered by many—added the anguish of apprehension to incredulous amazement. We, meanwhile, were more annoyed than frightened, and looked on the whole matter with egoistic intolerance, angry that our plans should be disturbed by so stupid an affair as international discord!

But as days passed, bringing the astounding information that Belgium was likely to be invaded,—bringing also England's protest, followed by her entrance into the fray,—even we neutrals began to feel the far-reaching shadow of evil.

There appeared no vaguest chance of getting away from distraught Paris; and, hope of this being gradually eclipsed by sympathy for the harassed people, a number of us offered our services to one of the many Red Cross associations rapidly forming in all quarters of the city. Not knowing what better to do, we entered a long, unventilated hall, crowded with fashionably-attired women, mostly—in this particular organization—stranded Americans eager to be of use, rather than pine in idleness for the comforts of unattainable homes. A hard-faced, very self-important Frenchwoman from one of the hospitals addressed us, and for two hours we perspired in the hall's breathless atmosphere, while our nerves were racked by her piercing voice uttering a volley of technical terms which not one in ten of her auditors understood. We inscribed our names as would-be helpers, and, anticipating an early departure for the front, provided ourselves with literature likely to prepare us more quickly than the Frenchwoman's rapid flow of unintelligible speech.

Meanwhile, living on charity was beginning to fret those among us whose financial standing was less widely known than that of others with millions behind them. The entering of the hotel's vast dining-room to partake of meals we could not pay for became embarrassing. One evening, to avoid this, my companion and I decided to procure edibles and have a Bohemian meal in our own rooms. With this in view, we set forth in search of such refreshments as we could afford. But the soldiers and their friends had been before us; and, as commercial traffic was at a standstill, new stock was not procurable to replace what they had exhausted.

If the city had been for months under siege it could scarcely have been more difficult to obtain food. Every *pâtisserie* had been sold out; even the *délicatessen* shops were void and the proprietors offensively curt in reply to our amazed inquiries.

"Why?" cried one, glaring personal hatred upon us. "We are in war! *Voilà pourquoi!* What do you expect? Next week we shall be starving, with *les Allemands* at our door!"

At another shop we secured two slices of cold ham, a bottle of olives, yielded grudgingly, and, at still another, some cream-cheese. Butter was invisible, and our search for bread in vain, until, after walking miles, we obtained two stale rolls, all that remained of yesterday's stock, with the usual remark: "*C'est la guerre!* What would you?"

Looking back, this seems incredible at so early a date; but so it was, and demonstrated to what a state of panic the people were brought. They appeared to suspect a German in everyone whose accent was foreign, and my own probably was accountable for the ungracious treatment we received.

The following morning, much to the general delight and surprise, glad tidings reached us from the U.S. Embassy—a train was to leave next day for Brussels! Although forbidden to take other luggage than a hand-satchel, we willingly left our large pieces at the hotel, and took our departure—quite forgetting that our names were inscribed as first-aid to the wounded! However, as ignorant paupers would hardly have been of much use, we and other destitute foreigners who fled at the first chance, were doubtless rather a good riddance than a loss.

The journey proved almost normally rapid and comfortable; and, once in Belgium, where financial difficulties would be remedied, we hoped to give what little help we could to those so bravely preparing to check the menaced invasion.

II

B

BRUSSELS appeared, at first sight, little affected by the tragedy already in action at her outer gates. Banks were doing business as usual; the streets calm; the shops and cafés crowded with apparently indifferent throngs, enjoying life with as much appearance of security as a year earlier. Although it was the dead season, some smart equipages were to be seen—a pleasant sight after the dearth of horses and vehicles in Paris! Taxi-cabs were still to be had, and only the fact that we were stopped four times by Belgian gendarmes—while driving to the hotel where, owing to lack of servants, we were obliged to remain a few days—suggested the city's knowledge that war was raging without.

But during that short drive other signs of change became visible. Innumerable red crosses blazed from the whitened windows of all public buildings and on the house-roofs; while, here and there, a demolished shop bearing a German name gave evidence of former excitement now stilled by a spirit of fearless confidence. Sometimes, also, a troubled face in the crowds told of thoughts centred on some brave hero at Liège; or a motor-car, going at reckless speed, suggested that the more responsible were actively engaged preparing to meet an overwhelming avalanche, of whose magnitude no one in Belgium then had any adequate conception. However, there was, on the whole, so little evidence of change in

the city that it was difficult to believe a hurriedly mustered army was even then straining in deadly conflict almost within cannon-hearing of those bright streets. Several of the larger business houses, however, were closed, or converted into hospitals for the wounded. Such was the "Financière" building, which had been beautifully fitted up with every modern convenience, and provided with good surgeons, nurses, and everything necessary for competent and comfortable treatment.

We all immediately took part in these preparations, each one eager to do his share, however little, in readiness for the first sad harvest of battle. No one then realized how few of Belgium's brave sons would reap the benefit of these fond efforts; but it was not long ere appalling circumstances made this clear to the disappointed inhabitants.

Hour by hour shocking news reached us from the scene of struggle, such as the fall of one fort after another at Liège, followed by the enemies' onward rush; while tales of their pitiless cruelty caused brief waves of apprehension to pass over the city—waves quickly calmed, however, by indomitable and astounding faith.

That the French and British would come in time was the prevailing argument; there was no danger nor cause for discouragement. Even though the forts had fallen, Belgium could hold the invaders in check until adequate assistance arrived; her forces might be driven back, step by step, for a short distance, but soon would have the upper hand and drive the foe back into Germany! Such was the reasoning of a public blinded by their heroic impulse to the situation's real peril. No sign of discouragement could be detected even when the remorseless grey tide was sweeping through ruined and blood-soaked districts toward the heart of their land.

And it was not merely the uneducated who received the ill-tidings with this amazing confidence, but men of high standing and competent judgment. Never, at that time, did I hear a word indicative of fear; the enthusiastic faith of the first days still remained unshaken.

Although the Government had already withdrawn from Brussels, no one believed that the capital was in danger; at any rate, no word was uttered in my hearing that betrayed the least anxiety on that score.

"Have no fear," the hotel proprietor remarked, as I passed through the lobby after breakfast on that fateful 20th of August 1914; "there is no danger of *les Boches* getting to Brussels. Our men are falling back only to gather force and attain better positions. Besides, the French and British are now at hand; we need only hold out a day or two longer, and then—*nous verrons*!" On every side the same confidence greeted me: "*Les Boches* are checked!... *Ils sont fichus!*... The British are in Antwerp!... In two weeks we shall be in Berlin!" and so forth; all spoken with a sort of delirious recklessness, suggesting determination not to recognize disquieting facts.

An hour or so after I left the hotel that morning, my way was blocked by a silent wall of people, lined on either side of the Boulevard d'Anvers, watching, in stupefied wonder, a seemingly interminable tide of grey-clad warriors—the Prussian Fourth Corps, under command of General von Armin—proudly taking possession of their fair city!

If that haughty and arrogant horde had dropped into our midst from a cloudless sky, I hardly think it could have caused more awed astonishment to the general public. So fantastically harrowing had been the tales of their uncivilized deeds in other quarters of Belgium, that the half-stunned people had come to think of the German army as something fabulous, something they were not likely ever to behold as a material reality. Stories of outrages, inconceivable in the present age, had been so mingled with encouraging reports of the monster's repulse, that popular opinion was unable to decide what was true and what was not—was unable to picture the awful menace rushing upon them as other than a moral nightmare, which, they imagined, would disappear as abruptly and abnormally as it had come.

The dazed amazement in the faces of that watching throng might have moved a devil to tears, or awakened rage in the heart of an angel—so silent and helpless they appeared before the mighty and pitiless force advancing through the stunned city—so callously indifferent was that force to the shame of their deed! It was like seeing a child confounded by the blow of a strong man who strode by, smiling with triumph at sight of its helpless pain. It made one ashamed to be akin in species to a race capable of committing, and so arrogantly, a wrong never to be effaced from their history.

Unknown to us at the time, Monsieur Adolphe Max, the ever-to-be-honoured Bourgmestre of Brussels, had gone early that morning under a white flag to implore the officer in command for permission to telegraph a plea to the German Emperor that his army be forbidden to enter Brussels—the city where he, the Kaiser, had been welcomed and entertained, only a week or so earlier, by the Belgian King and people. The officer promised to communicate his request to the general-in-chief. But the only reply Monsieur Max received was, not only the entrance of the troops, but a demand for enormous quantities of food and a *contribution de guerre* from the city of Brussels of fifty million francs, to be paid in three days; and from the province of Brabant four hundred and fifty millions, to be paid before the 1st of September! This was William the Second's response to a people whose faith he had betrayed, who had done him no other ill than refusing to aid his frantic impatience to overwhelm and crush a neighbour and friendly state.

The following quantities of food-stuffs were at once demanded from Brussels by the German army and delivered:

On 21st August, 30,000 kilos of bread, 5000 kilos of smoked meat, 17,000 kilos live-stock, 10,000 kilos of rice, 1400 kilos of coffee, 1700 kilos of sugar, 700 kilos of cacao, 1700 kilos of salt, 120,000 kilos of oats, 170 kilos of tea, 10,000 litres of

wine.

On 22nd August, the same amount, save that the bread was reduced to 20,000 kilos, with an addition of 20,000 kilos of flour.

On 23rd August, everything in like quantities was again yielded at the army's command, with the exception of bread, which 30,000 kilos of flour replaced.

As this severe drainage threatened to reduce to famine the 800,000 inhabitants of Brussels, Monsieur Max informed the German authorities he could not vouch for the people's submission if such exactions continued. The occupying Government thereupon agreed, over the Governor's signature, to make no more requisitions during a period of eight days. But the following day new demands were presented, and an attempt, resisted by Monsieur Max, was made to set aside a contract which the army chiefs declined to recognize as controlling their actions.

In regard to the war indemnity, Monsieur Max arranged with the Government to pay it off by instalments by the 30th of September. Payments were made regularly, and of the 50,000,000 there remained due but 4,400,000 to be paid when, on the 24th of September, von Luettwitz announced that no further reimbursement would be made by the army for food-stuffs requisitioned, as the war indemnity had not been paid within the time originally specified!

But my object is not to go into these details, or to depict, more than is necessary, the darker side of Belgium's martyrdom under German dominion. The world knows enough of such matters and will probably know more before these recollections appear. Tragedy and sorrow, moreover, have been heard, seen, felt *ad nauseam* by every dweller in the occupied country. No account of those years can escape their dominating note of tragedy, but all such events herein given are limited to those not generally known, whose truth has been personally ascertained.

The invasion of a capital by enemy troops had always seemed to me the culminating tragedy of war, and one likely to be rife with stirring incidents. How little like my preconceived idea was this silent and awesome mastery—this slowly-moving stream of concentrated force, passing between those walls of ashen-white faces, whence thousands of wide eyes spoke the voiceless misery and amazement of a people betrayed! The warrior's pride was not lacking, but a pride less admirable even than that of the criminal forces led by Napoleon into capitals which he had overwhelmed.

But why connect with this ignoble victory the supremely evil Corsican's name? Napoleon, like Alexander and Hannibal, was superb almost to the end. But William II., devoid of magnetism, devoid of the human understanding and tact so essential to a great leader, sought to follow in his steps with no finer attribute than long-nourished brute force and meanly-developed craftiness. He utterly failed to recognize that no number of cannon, no number, however stupendous, of enslaved legions, could replace Napoleon's understanding.

From Germany's regiments of triumphant treachery, advancing through Brussels,

no glance of comprehension or compassion met the people's wide-eyed gaze. Only one sentiment could be read in the eyes looking sternly upon them from under shining Prussian helmets—a vainglorious contempt for the race that had so sublimely resisted their unjust and inexorable demands.

The scene, viewed from the standpoint of one bred in a country long since rid of barbarism, appeared strangely anachronistic and theatrical—like the blazing pageantry of a stage, briefly holding the attention of an enlightened community which would presently ring down the curtain and return to real and serious occupations. The leaders—young men, for the most part, of noble families; men whose brain and morals had been cramped, since infancy, into the narrow circumference of their eagle-topped helmets—sat their horses in the heroic pose of a stage Siegfried. Their polished armour and ornaments reflected heaven's sun as meretriciously as do those of Wagner's characters the glare of the footlights. Each one appeared inwardly inflated by a sense of individual world-power, by an intoxicating impression that in him was revived the spirit of conquering Rome—and, with it, the right to tread under his spurred foot the wan faces his absurdly proud glance surveyed. Then came the worn troops following on foot—they who had borne the brunt of conflict—devoid of ornament, trudging along at the horses' heels, obedient offenders of the people who despised them; hoodwinked slaves, persuaded they were serving their country, while inflicting and enduring the tortures of hell merely to enhance imperial pride and save the despotic throne so long founded upon their blind submission.

III

A

AFTER that tragic day, Brussels came more and more under the tyranny of the "iron fist" by which the Kaiser once boasted he would win the world-power unattained by other and far more capable enemies of peace. German soldiers swarmed through the streets, always hurrying to fulfil urgent business of their impatient leaders, who, on their way to overwhelm France, panted to thrust the sword of ruin deeper into hapless Belgium. During those first weeks of the occupation the city appeared obsessed by a restless mass of grey-robed energy. Every unit of the vast armies seemed infected by this passion. The streets fairly roared with frenzy-driven automobiles, enormous war-like things, sombre as mighty death-machines, mostly torpedo-shaped, driven, with entire disregard for the safety of pedestrians, through streets ridded of all traffic that might hamper their way. The harsh or piercing cries of their horns never ceased; nor, when an officer of high rank was the occupant, the gay bugle notes, clear and triumphantly joyous, which so racked the aching nerves and hearts of every native. I think no one then in Brussels, who took the invasion to heart, will ever forget that bright, repeated melody so galling to those whose dear ones had

perished in the unequal struggle.

The *voyous* of the rue Haute districts, however, found a means of shaming it to silence, after the great repulse at the Marne. They put words to the melody and sang them at full voice in echo, each time the bugle announced the presence of a high official. The words, which fitted perfectly, were: "*C'est loin à Paris!*"

Presently, it was heard no more, and only then, it seemed, did the stunned Belgians begin to awake and take some interest in life. They could do little for their wounded; for all hospitals, as well as public buildings, were seized by the enemy to house Germany's mutilated slaves, or serve as resting-places for troops. All the comfort many of these latter enjoyed was a litter of straw laid on the floors of corridors.

I was obliged to step over their sleeping and evidently exhausted forms when, seeking a pass one day to go to our villa, ten miles from Brussels, I was erroneously led by a dull-witted soldier, who should not have admitted me, to the top floor of the post-office building. There I saw his commanding officer—who (it turned out) had nothing whatever to do with the giving of passes! Though it was after midday, the men lay sleeping like animals all along the hallways, and their chief, roused from repose on a sofa in a separate room, was angrily struggling into his great boots when I was announced. His rage at being disturbed, but more at having me appear before he was ready to receive me with impressive dignity, was vented in a volley of abusive language hurled at the wretched subordinate.

The situation was indeed rather embarrassing for a leader—though a minor one—of the power-proud Prussian army. With feet clad only in grey woollen socks, hair roughened, and eyes red and heavy with sleep, he certainly presented a rather comical picture, crimson with anger and bellowing insults at the man, whom he ordered from the room. Of me he took not the slightest notice until the boots were on, and during that interval of silence, shut up as I was alone with him in a place where, as I saw at once, I had no proper excuse for intruding, my one desire was to find some means of escape before he should notice me; for I expected anything but polite treatment at his hands.

However, apart from a certain amount of silly boasting, and a rather superior expression of regret that he could not provide the desired pass, he said nothing really objectionable in answer to my surprising appeal, although his expression showed he had no very flattering idea of my intelligence. On learning my nationality, and how wrong direction had led me to him, the arrogance of his manner softened considerably: "You will not be able to go to your villa at present," he said on learning where it was, "our armies are now in that locality; and even if you were permitted to go, it would not be safe."

"But the house may be destroyed," I replied, "and there are things I value there which no money could replace."

He shrugged and returned, with mock sympathy quickly followed by vanity, "*Schade!*—but no exceptions can be made. Others have lost their treasures, and

many more are likely to. War does not consider individuals."

"But why *is* there war in this country?" I ventured. "What on earth is your excuse for coming here to ruin a peaceful nation?"

"Belgium was given her chance to avoid war—she would not take it; that is not our fault!"

I longed to tell him a few unflattering truths, but the fact of being four stories above the street, with hundreds of armed men within call, forced me to limit my reply to: "That depends how one understands fault; certainly the Belgians were not at fault."

"They were; they were siding with England and France. Stupid people! What will they gain by making an enemy of Germany? The Allies must yield to us; then where will Belgium be?"

"And if they do not yield?"

He laughed softly: "*Ach!* There is no question of that! Are we not rushing on France already? In three weeks or less we shall be in Paris, and shortly after that we shall have England at our mercy."

I forced a smile, though inwardly his confidence made me tremble. "Aren't you counting a little too much on your successful invasion of a very small and unprepared country? England and France may also be unprepared, but they have greater resources and more time to collect them than poor Belgium had."

"*Ach, bewahr!*" he replied scornfully, "they can never resist our armies. When we take Paris, England's morale will be broken; she will not be able to raise an army!"

"If you take it!"

"No, *when* we take it!" he replied, with quite a genial smile. "Don't deceive yourself; we Germans do not attempt things we are not sure of attaining. Everything is planned to the smallest detail. But tell me, are you in sympathy with the Allies?"

"I am a neutral."

"*Ach, so!*... Are all Americans strictly neutral?"

"They are supposed to be."

He eyed me thoughtfully before saying: "I think they are jealous of us, like England—like all the world! This war must prove Germany's supremacy and put an end to all that!"

As this interview took place some little time before the battle of the Marne, I must own to a very unneutral pang of resentment, mingled with dread lest his boasting might prove well founded. But, galling as it was, I was convinced the man spoke only what had been drilled into him, and not his own sentiments. He

was quite a young fellow, neither aristocratic in appearance nor so self-important as are most of his class. His round blue eyes often softened with the wistful musing of a mind not altogether sure of what he boasted, nor why he was there—what was leading men only slightly more enslaved than he, to fight for an object none could define. Later on he recited some of the horrors he had witnessed on his way from Liège—the so-called legitimate horrors of war, not those relating to civilians—and spoke almost with tears of certain friends he had lost in the conflict. Thus softened, he invited me to have coffee with him in his den, and pressingly repeated the invitation all the way down those interminable, man-encumbered flights of stairs which I made for as soon as politeness permitted. My entering of the room of an officer in command, to obtain a pass which only the administrative authorities could give, might very easily have been understood as an attempt to spy, or attributed to some other equally dangerous motive. Consequently, I could only be grateful, when again at liberty, that my blundering guide had not led me into the presence of a success-drunken superior officer, who might have exhibited his native bullying tendencies when he found me at his mercy. My chance host, it must be acknowledged, was not of this type, and only in regard to Belgium did he reveal that tyranny toward weakness so characteristic of most Prussians in authority.

IV

T

THE lower-class Belgian's horror of the invaders grew daily, as more and more harrowing tales of their atrocities came to us from regions through which their armies were rushing. "*Schrechlichkeit*" was attaining its object at a bitter price to the poor unreasoning peasants, who saw not only those dear to them slain for no apparent cause, but also their superiors, priests, prominent townsmen, and even women and children. Stories reached us of such unparalleled ugliness that many refused to credit them, and only when like crimes were committed in and about Brussels could we believe modern humanity capable of such deeds. These are now more or less known to the outer world; although doubtless many done in secret will never come to light, save when the victims, at the Last Judgment, add their voice of condemnation to those of innocent men, women, and children sent to sudden and ghastly death on the *Lusitania*. But that revolting crime had not yet happened, to inflame neutral minds in Brussels, which, until convinced of those done in Belgium, were genuinely neutral.

So unbiased, indeed, was the feeling among them that even the violation of Belgium was looked on by some as an ugly action, but not wholly damning according to war morals. I heard neutral men, who admired Germany, even seek to excuse it as a daring and possibly necessary "strategic move." But less than three weeks after the fall of Liège, these very men were among the bitterest and

most outspoken haters of the race they had tried to defend. Civilized sentiment was so outraged by the wrongs heaped upon Belgians that several Americans, Dutch, and other neutrals undertook, for their own satisfaction, to investigate certain awful incidents related. When they were convinced that these were not only true, but in some cases too mildly depicted, their neutrality fled in a storm of rage.

The terror which these acts temporarily roused in the peasantry was revealed to me the day I ventured out, by bicycle, to our villa in the vicinity of Wavre. No other means of conveyance being available, I discovered, after considerable search, an old wheel unearthed from the depths of a merchant's cellar—one of the few secreted to escape requisition. No trains were running and no trams, and offer of high payment failed to tempt the drivers of such few miserable hack-horses as remained after the taxi-cabs had been seized. But, by starting early in the morning, it was possible to make the trip by wheel, pack, and return before nightfall. So, having obtained a German pass from Government headquarters the day after my visit to the sleepy officer at the post office, I attached a small American flag to the handle-bar, and started forth at six a.m. through the deserted Bois, and thence to still more deserted country roads. There was no traffic in those days save occasional German military cars, and no sign of human or any other life on the roads. The Belgians were then for the most part keeping indoors, in some cases through fear of the Germans, in others because, commerce and business being dead, they had nothing to tempt them out; therefore, until I reached an outlying village, I met no one to direct me. Here, while coasting down the main road, flanked by modest peasant abodes, I was startled by seeing two men rush out, and wave frantically to stop me.

"You can't proceed!" exclaimed one as I dismounted. "Come quickly into the house! *Vite! Vite!* They are there, just beyond!"

"Who?" I asked, amazement at this hysterical excitement making me forget the cause of their terror.

"*Les Allemands!* Come—be quick; they will appear at any moment!"

If a tribe of hungry cannibals had been in the vicinity, their agitation could not have been greater. Women were shrieking warnings from windows, children peering terrified from behind curtains, and the two men literally trying to drag me indoors.

"But I *must* go on!" I exclaimed. "I have a pass and am an American!"

"*C'est égal!* they respect nothing!" was the reply. "They will shoot you down! They will rob and tear you to bits! *Ne savez-vous pas ce que c'est qu'un Boche?* He is a beast without reason! He stops at nothing! Think only what our innocents have suffered!"

"And my old father, who did no wrong!" wailed a woman from the window.

"They are burning the village beyond!" cried another.

Then several at once: "They killed my brother.... They cut off the hands of little children; ... they burned the farm of So-and-so and murdered his daughter!... *Et mon fils! mon fils!* the father of a family! he lies, buried with twenty others in a heap, at Tamines!"

All that was said I could not hear, indeed did not try to, and being anxious to go on, sought to escape the two men's kindly attention. When they were at last persuaded to resign me to the predicted doom, I sped on down the hill to a cross-road, and, turning to the right, saw a moving mass of troops rapidly approaching in the direction I was obliged to take—on foot, as the road mounted too steeply to permit of riding. The troop gained on me so rapidly that their heavy tramp and rough breathing were soon audible. Before we reached the level they were striding along within arm's reach, line after line of dusty, perspiring, war-brutalized men, pressing on to new scenes of slaughter. The mounted officers in command glanced at me, noted the flag which then had not been forbidden, and returned their eager gaze to the distance beyond, evidently controlled but by one idea. *Haste*—that was the motto of these frenzy-driven legions, ordered to rush into France despite all obstacles, over the living and the dead, treading even, if need be, their own fellows under foot!

The soldiers were the heavy, stalwart men of the first German army, trained and hardened for war—conscious machines of destruction, who appeared to have forgotten they were human. In their faces one saw only an animal-like, unquestioning obedience that had become, through long domination, the very essence of their strength, the will actuating their movements, their thought, their very life; "Not to reason why; but to do and die," seemed branded on their souls. In none of the many different army contingents that later came to Brussels, either allied or German, was this strange, dogged, unhuman and unthinking obedience so strikingly visible. While watching them and noting their expression of unintelligent, inexorable determination to push on according to supreme command, the impression came to me that, had I fallen and lain disabled in the road, they would have marched over me as unhesitatingly as they trod the dust.

At the hotel where we were staying, a party of English nurses were putting in a weary time waiting vainly for the wounded. One of these had offered to accompany me on the trip to our villa, but at the last moment was forbidden to do so by her superior. The evening of my return from the expedition, which proved successful and less eventful than predicted, I told them that it had been accomplished without the difficulties expected by their matron. "Really? So glad!" replied the one referred to, evidently regretting that she had been denied this chance to relieve her dull days.

They were a rather disconsolate lot, very smart-looking, in their pretty nursing uniforms, but bored by enforced idleness. More than one told me, with true British spirit, that she would prefer to be in the most dangerous section of the front rather than pass another idle day at the expense of those they had come to serve. Later on this wish was gratified, and no doubt each of them has more

than repaid the cost of their brief period of sloth.

A certain man, also residing at the hotel, was constantly haunting these women, who complained of his persistent attentions and efforts to draw them into conversation. He posed as an Englishman, and, before England entered the war, had been in that country. But his appearance was not English, and his voice had a guttural accent that made me suspect him of being a German spy—a suspicion that I later had reason to believe was well founded. He had the room next to mine, with a communicating door, through which one could hear voices even when lowered. Visitors constantly came there, mostly women who spoke French along the corridor to the servant directing them, but, once in his room with the door closed, spoke German, and usually took care that no word should be heard outside. But one day a woman entered so early that the knock at his door awakened me; I then heard low voices and the crisp rattle of papers. Presently another woman was shown into the room; and she, evidently agitated, spoke in German loud enough for me to hear in my bed these significant sentences: "*Ach Gott*, you are confident, but I am not! It is said the Russians mean to make of it a religious war. In that case it will go hard with Germany." The man's reply was too low to be heard, and she continued: "To be sure; but look at this." A sound came of paper like that of a letter being opened. At this moment the telephone-bell rang; the man answered it in French, and his words came to me clearly: "Hallo! Yes. She is here with me now; I have seen the letter.... *Pas du tout!* Do nothing until I see you.... Yes, he is a Belgian, but his *wife* is English—there are two sons; one got away the day the Germans entered.... Inquire at the Anglo-American club, Toison d'Or.... *Oh zut!*—tell him I shall be at your place at eleven and——" The rest was drowned by someone's pet dog barking in the corridor—a soldier's dog, as it proved afterwards.

On descending for dinner that evening, my companion and I were joined, while awaiting the lift, by two German soldiers—probably the orderlies of officers lodged on the same *étage*. With them was a fox terrier, doubtless the one that interrupted my eavesdropping. It approached to be caressed, which led me to ask the soldiers if they intended to take it to the front.

"*Gewiss!*" replied one, rather aggressively; "he will come with us to Paris and then to *London*!"

The emphasis on the last word betrayed that he thought me English, and the intended taunt angered me.

"Really?" I replied; "evidently you think I am English!"

He smiled shamefacedly, and blurted naïvely: "Aren't you?"

I coldly told him my nationality, and added: "But if I *were* English your boast would not trouble me. You are still a long way from Paris, and even if you ever *should* get there, you would not remain long. And as for London—you might more easily get to heaven!"

They received this sally with confident laughter, and left the lift, one repeating

significantly, emphasizing the words with an upraised finger: "You'll see! You'll see!"

As the German military element was increasing daily at the hotel, all persons of other nationalities departed, save those obliged to remain. We, the British nurses, and some few Belgians, unable to return to their homes in other parts of Belgium, were consequently in constant association with numerous high officials, who, in the first pride of victory, discarded their war-raiment for brilliant blue dress-uniforms, ornamented with gold or silver. They strutted about with a domineering air of superiority which later became greatly modified, but at that time was insufferable.

One evening, immediately after the fall of Reims, when the Belgian spirit was more depressed than ever before, a dinner was held in the public dining-room by a number of high-grade officers. They were seated at a long table close to ours, all in gala attire, and evidently jubilant over some new disaster to the Belgian forces—a satisfaction which they appeared particularly anxious should be noted by the Belgians present. But the latter, who hid their aching hearts under lowered eyelids, appeared not to heed them. Outside, however, there were many interested watchers. As the evening was warm, windows had been left open, and at them gathered the idle street crowds, with nothing, night or day, to divert their thoughts—no business, no theatres, no cafés—and too anxious to remain in their homes.

No slight consideration for their helpless and ruined victims, looking in on the joyous party, stayed the gay laughter and toasts of those at that table! Triumph, which common decency should have impelled them to indulge privately, was flagrantly flourished in the wan faces of men who knew not how they were to feed their families in a week's time, of youths cast out of employment and unable to give their country the aid they longed to give.

Soldiers bearing dispatches constantly entered the room, trod heavily, with clatter of spurs, to within a few paces of the table, drew up, brought their heels together, and stood at salute until given permission to approach. Officers of lower rank paused, on seeing the august and radiant gathering, saluted, and continued to bow and salute while passing the table to find a smaller one in another part of the room. Judging by their servility and that of the soldiers, the two in general's attire at the dinner must have been of high rank, but their identities were not known in the hotel. To my eyes each looked as important as the other, puffed up with pride, betraying, in every glance and movement, confident conviction that the present satisfaction was but a fore-runner of greater triumphs.

Again and again when a dispatch was read, evidently containing satisfactory news from the front, the joyous cry, "*Hoch! Hoch! Hoch!*" rang out to that pathetically wistful audience, who knew it was in celebration of a fresh wound dealt to the country they loved. And yet in their pale, troubled faces no sign of hatred or rage could be detected, only the same childlike curiosity expressed on

the first day, and a sort of puzzled wonder, as though they found it difficult to believe that atrocities such as were committed in their land had been ordered by men of such good appearance, and apparently so civilized. Even to us it seemed incredible, while watching that gathering of smart-looking, intelligent beings, who might have won the respect, possibly even the admiration, of a people accustomed throughout their history to the wrongdoings of mightier nations; who, as a whole, would have appreciated a generous recognition of their noble and courageous stand for honour. But those men, whose close-cropped, sabre-scarred heads were held so high above a uniform they gradually made odious to the entire world, were blinded by vanity, delirious with success. The long-awaited hour of opportunity had arrived, as pregnant with great promise as those that bred the first Roman and the first French empires; an hour when Europe, lulled by the harmony of peace, might be shocked to submission before Germany's secretly-created Frankenstein!

It was amazing to see, during the first week or so of the occupation, with what naïve interest the Belgians clustered about even minor units of the army that had so ruthlessly afflicted them. They would pause to stare at a common soldier with something of the awed perplexity the Indians of America evinced on their first introduction to firearms; or gather, silent and gaping, about the great automobiles to watch imposing officers alight. This unconscious flattery, evidently relished, disappeared, however, in a short time, not only because Prussians became so prevalent that they no longer attracted attention, but because the more intelligent citizens took a stand against it, and reproved those who thus gratified the vanity of their enemies. And the people were not slow to realize an error due more to their lack of occupation than to tolerant interest in the intruders. Disaster, in fact, had come so suddenly upon them; their lives had been so abruptly changed from the even tenor of prosperity to want and misery, that they were too stunned at once to realize the cause. Some among the lower classes, indeed, appeared incapable of seeing the situation as other than a temporary, inexplicable calamity, not likely to endure more than a week or two. For this reason, no doubt, there was very little resentment in speech or action. The general attitude was one of patient endurance of incomprehensible ills, a fact which made the lying German excuses for their atrocities ring false to all who had witnessed the inoffensive bearing of the inhabitants at the time of their bitterest hour, when the enemy entered Brussels.

Better-class Belgians, who understood the situation, were bitter enough in private speech, and in their determined and unflinching efforts to hamper the invaders by every possible means which their unarmed and imprisoned condition permitted. That they accomplished much secretly, and despite the severe and ever-increasing espionage, was acknowledged by the Germans themselves, when information of their every movement was proved to have reached the Allied forces within an hour. Every effort was made by the Government to solve the mystery, and discover the secret means by which the exact locality of a Zeppelin garage or ammunition depot, army movements, etc., was at once conveyed to their adversaries. Many suffered death or long imprisonment on mere suspicion

of connection with these secret societies, and spies in civil dress were set to watch even such as were not suspected, whose intelligence or standing made it possible they might be in the secret. Another mystery especially galling to the Prussians was the inexplicable publication and distribution of the *Libre Belgique*, a small truth-telling journal, which spared neither the Kaiser nor his army in its caustic and often insulting criticism, and served as a tonic to the oppressed people; an antidote to poison injected with malignant persistency by the occupying Powers. No amount of persecution, investigation, or bribery led to the discovery of where this brave little sheet was published, or who managed it; but several entire families were arrested and subjected to the torture of military inquisition, to fines and long terms of imprisonment, on very slight grounds of suspicion.

Although the *Libre Belgique* seldom contained any definite news from outside, its free voice, speaking openly what everyone longed to utter but dared not, was a delight to us all. Persons of the very highest social standing undertook its circulation, carrying copies in hollowed-out walking-sticks, lining of hats, and so forth, in order to distribute them as widely as possible. Some day the story of its origin, its compositors, and indiscoverable place of publication will be known and welcomed with intense interest by all who drew from its single page almost the only ray of encouragement and hope those dark years offered for jaded spirits.

On the evening of the military dinner above referred to, which was in the early part of September, an incident occurred serving, in an impressive manner, to relieve the fretting recollection of that callously gay party, which had forced us and, I think, many others to leave the hotel immediately afterwards.

In the midst of that discordant levity, when the Prussians' laughter and noisy toasts were ringing through the room, there suddenly sounded from without a wild and excited cry that swelled to a very thunder of voices as it was taken up by the throngs in the street. Naturally, we all sprang from table and hurried to the entrance door, anticipating we knew not what, for the cries were too glad in tone to suggest any fresh blast of all-too-familiar calamity.

Outside many persons from near-by houses had gathered in the middle of the boulevard—men in shirt-sleeves, women only partly dressed, children, and aged grandparents, all electrified by a note of joy such as they had not heard since they had cheered their departing army only a few weeks ago; weeks already seeming like years! All were gazing upwards into the pale sky of a summer-like twilight. "*Le voilà! le voilà!*" was shouted on every side in rough men's voices, the shriller tones of women, and the piping treble of children. When the object of interest became visible to all—an Allied aeroplane soaring, like a bird of good omen, just above the street—those disjointed cries blended into one universal roar, that seemed to shake to their foundations the lines of massive buildings against which it rang.

So hysterically intense was the excitement that it looked for some moments as if the people had lost control of themselves, and as if some perilous outbreak would be the consequence—an event that could only lead to ruthless slaughter of the

unarmed citizens. But the pathetic, almost tragic, poetry of the scene made one oblivious of everything threatening. One felt only the doleful significance of that high-soaring, unapproachable friend from the outer world, at whose message of encouragement we could only guess; whose coming only made clearer the fact that all who watched it from the dusk-shadowed streets were prisoners, as much cut off from the free world as though interned on some island far removed from the sphere of former interests, and denied all communication with it.

I had not fully realized our woeful position before the air-craft's appearance, which stirred me to echo the excitement and joy of that helpless throng, watching, many with tears in their eyes, this proof that they were not forgotten by the nations they had so bravely served.

Although it was nearly eight p.m., daylight still lingered in the heavens, or rather a soft, green aftermath of day where the great bird circled, high above the house-tops, dark and awe-inspiring in that sea of pale light.

"*C'est un Anglais!*" cried some; and others: "*C'est un Français!*" "*C'est un Belge!*" while again and again a wild shout of glad greeting rose from the streets to that far visitor, which was presently recognized as a Belgian.

Suddenly a still louder sound shocked these cries to a brief silence. The echoing report of cannon, already set up at advantageous points in the city, told that the visitor had been espied by less loving eyes. However, he seemed to know that nothing could reach him at that particular point. At any rate, he never wavered, and while the cannon roared, and cries rose again, now in frantic applause of his courage, he hovered as before, quietly winging in a circle above the darkening capital, seeming, by easy and fearless movement, to express sympathy and encouragement.

When light deepened and lamps began to flare in the sombre streets, the air-craft, whose driver evidently realized he would soon be invisible, turned with a wide sweep and, heading southward, flew off into the violet mist of distance, dying into a mere speck still passionately watched by yearning eyes from that sea of upturned faces.

Later on these aerial visits became frequent; but this one, the first sign we had had since the occupation from the outside world, made a lasting impression. It was said later that printed slips—a sample of which I unfortunately never saw—had been dropped from the aeroplane bearing this cheering message: "Have courage for a little time; we shall soon deliver you."

That, alas, was in the first days of autumn 1914!

V

C

CONDITIONS in Brussels became day by day more like those of a vast prison. The prospect of escape only grew slighter with time, and the yoke of German methods more and more bitter. Their *affiches*, recounting the marvellous achievements of "*nos troupes victorieuses*," their proclamations of all sorts with which the walls were constantly papered, were like hot irons turned in the wounds of the Belgians, painful to everyone in sympathy with the victims. Even announcements derogatory to the Belgian army were not spared them. In one German report, which I read, a Belgian prisoner was quoted as having praised the German army to the detriment of his own, and as having added: "If we were led by German officers, we should do as well as German soldiers." Of course everyone understood this as only another sample of *la vérité allemande*, but nevertheless it brought the blood of anger to the face of many a man longing, but unable, to strangle the armed liar with his shackled hands.

There was an ungenerous spirit expressed in every announcement of events such as the Belgians were most eager to hear—a spirit especially inexcusable in a victorious power. Every success of the Allied armies was either ridiculed or ignored; only the Germans' progress was set forth in glowing words, and victories of real importance were presented in exaggerated detail, on bright blue bulletins which no eye could avoid seeing. No event, however trivial—as compared to their own rapid advance—that might awake even a brief thrill of enthusiasm or hope in their prisoners, was allowed by the Germans to reach them. Even the Marne victory was so disguised that I have since heard German officers, engaged in administrative duty in Brussels, state how neither they, nor any of their friends in Germany, knew the reason of that astounding reverse, never definitely acknowledged by official reports.

On 2nd September 1914 the Governor, von der Goltz, had published a proclamation luring the Belgians to obedience by pretended sympathy with their patriotic feelings. This began as follows: "Belgian citizens: I demand of no one to renounce his patriotic sentiments. I expect of you all a sensible submission and absolute obedience in regard to the Governor-General's orders. I invite you to show him confidence and lend him your assistance."

Two weeks later von Luettwitz, the Military Governor, demanded the withdrawal of the Belgian flag—the sole expression of patriotic sentiment possible to a people whose speech, action, and will were under subjection. This was the first step in an administration of tyranny, which rapidly developed to unprecedented brutality under the odious governments which followed.

The noble Mayor of Brussels, Bourgmestre Max, fought Luettwitz and von der Goltz with unrelenting obstinacy and courage, in every instance where they sought to ignore agreements which they had solemnly made at the time of their entrance—and quickly set aside when safely installed! It was only then that the flags were forbidden, which had been allowed to float until the iron hand had closed firmly on the city; only then that demands were made contrary to primary agreements. All manner of injustice was resorted to under the plea that, "*nécessité faisant loi*," the former contracts no longer held good.

On the 29th of August the Military Governor of Liège had a bulletin posted in that city announcing that Monsieur Max had stated that the French Government declared itself unable to assist Belgium in any way. The following day Monsieur Max proved the indomitable courage that made him so hateful to the Germans, by publishing, in wall-posters with enormous headlines, a flat denial of this utterly untruthful assertion. His *affiche* was as follows:

"Aux Habitants de la Ville de Liège

"Le Bourgmestre de Bruxelles a fait savoir au Commandant allemand que le Gouvernement français a déclaré au Gouvernement belge l'impossibilité de l'assister offensivement en aucune manière, vu qu'il se voit lui-même forcé à la défensive."

To this repetition of the German announcement M. Max added in the largest available type:

"J'oppose à cette affirmation le démenti le plus formel.

"Adolphe Max."

It must have been a staggering surprise to the invaders, who thought their frightfulness had killed the Belgian spirit, and consequently that their trick would succeed.

Von Luettwitz at once publicly forbade the posting of any bulletin without his permission.

To be rid of a man who so energetically defied them on undeniable grounds of right, they arrested Adolphe Max alleging that he had failed to deliver the whole amount of war indemnity within the specified time. Although Echevin Jacqmain offered himself as hostage in place of the Bourgmestre so greatly loved and needed by the people of Brussels, his offer was declined; and on the 26th of September Monsieur Max was carried away in an automobile—followed and preceded by others filled with armed men!—to be imprisoned in a fortress. With his departure, Brussels was more than ever at the mercy of those who ruled her with the despotism and unnecessary severity which newly-won power always develops in men of shallow mind and ignoble character.

So it was not sufficient that the flags had been withdrawn in response to the beautiful appeal Monsieur Max had made to the people—an appeal which, after referring to the inconsistency of the German order with former agreements, ended in these words: "Je demande à cette population de donner un nouvel exemple du sang-froid et de la grandeur d'âme, dont elle a fourni déjà tant de preuves en ces jours douloureux. Acceptons provisoirement le sacrifice qui nous est imposé. Retirons nos drapeaux pour éviter des conflits, et attendons patiemment l'heure de la réparation."

The beloved tricolour was hidden from sight, but after the departure of Max, even the wearing of a tiny button or bit of ribbon presenting the colours, became a crime punishable by imprisonment. Women had these roughly dragged from

their dress in the street by any passing officer who wished to make a public exhibition of power, and one whom I know was ordered by a young stripling wearing the Prussian uniform, when seated opposite her in a tram, to hand over a tiny brooch whereon the three colours were scarcely perceptible.

I shall never forget the grief that swept through the city when the Belgian flag was put away. It was as though the prisoners' last connection with their king and happy prosperous past were broken. Even the children felt it; one saw them, when no German was in sight, drag a faded bit of tricolour ribbon from their pockets and wave it in gleeful defiance of a government that had robbed their young days of all happiness, and later ground down so many of them through poverty to death.

Gradually the adamant walls of oppression closed more narrowly about us, and the pervading mood became subtly affected by crafty German efforts to kill hope. Prisoners we were, and prisoners likely to remain for indefinite time, with a monster for gaoler pitiless as he who guarded the "cellar of the dead" at the ill-famed Luxembourg. Indeed, the moral and physical misery to which the people of Brussels were soon reduced was probably not less, measured by duration, than the concentrated horror of those September days during the first French Revolution. Streets never actually flowed with blood, but many a life was extinguished on that crime-stained spot where Miss Cavell was placed before a wall and shot in secret; many a mind was crazed in futile efforts to save an innocent son, father, or brother. It was not for days the people of Belgium suffered, but for months that dragged on into years of ever-increasing oppression and tragedy.

But daring courage and heroism were not lacking. Many a man, still unknown to fame, risked his life for his country within the city walls; many a woman of high standing, secretly serving her nation, scorned peril and drained a cup of moral anguish no less repellent than that drunk by the Marquis de Sombreuil's daughter—a cup, to speak figuratively, not seldom containing the life-blood of those dearest to her. It cannot be pretended that all whom the Germans suspected were innocent, but Prussian astuteness was usually more successful in trapping the guiltless than the guilty. Fretted by failure, the Germans vented their passion on these innocent victims, in order at least to obtain the advantage of a terrifying example.

Despotism waxed strong and incredibly barbaric, when every Teuton was swelled to bursting with pride and the Allies seemed helplessly retreating before the onrush of his mighty legions. Petty laws, senselessly fretting, were imposed on the people of occupied Belgium. Citizens were ordered indoors at seven p.m., all shops and other public places had to be closed and street lights extinguished, often without reason given; sometimes as punishment for the refractory act of some peasant whose very existence was unknown to those who paid the penalty. In Bruges and other towns, citizens were forbidden to walk on the pavement which a German officer happened to be traversing, and had to salute him deferentially from the centre of the street.

In time all liberty was extinguished, and efforts were made even to suppress the French language. Flemish, closely related to German, and consequently offering a means of facilitating future control of the country, was ordered to appear first on all public announcements and documents, legal or other; also tram conductors were obliged to announce the names of streets in Flemish. The privacy of homes was invaded with or without excuse, while of course all correspondence, even in the city, and any other writing, was subjected to the severest censure.

The English language was looked upon as an affront to the enemy. Even we neutrals were made to feel it objectionable to speak our native tongue in public because of the Teuton hatred of England, for an English word affected the invaders as a red rag does a bull. Had they dared then to offend America, which would have forced them to feed the Belgians themselves, they would no doubt have officially forbidden it.

VI

A

AFTER the battle of the Marne, the incredible outcome of which we only learned days later through secret outside sources, the spirit of Brussels revived a little, and the people's wonderful, almost unreasoning, confidence became stronger than even before the occupation. Gradually the city began to assume a more normal aspect; certain cafés reopened and many shops, also street trams were run at unsatisfactory intervals. But existence was constantly haunted by the knowledge that every act and look was watched by the ubiquitous spy in civil dress eagerly seeking an excuse to drag a citizen to the Kommandantur. No one dared speak aloud of topics uppermost in the minds of all, or betray in public by so much as a glance his knowledge of that great victory which the Germans endeavoured to conceal. The city walls became more universally papered with *affiches* curtailing liberty, or announcing penalties inflicted upon well-known citizens. "*A la peine de mort*," in enormous lettering that could be read several yards away, frequently attracted crowds to read the names of friends or prominent men condemned to death for such faults as later on, when Germany was less confident of becoming the world's master, were punished by clement terms of imprisonment.

As neutrals, we were not personally troubled in this respect; but several of our friends were inexplicably arrested and sent to confinement either in Germany or Belgium. The cause of these arrests in many cases was never known, even by those who suffered them, only to be liberated after a term of months or years of cruel confinement in cells. In other instances the cause for arrest was given out with the usual non-appreciation of right—as in the case of Count de ——, a well-known banker of Dinant, who was shot because he declined to yield the savings of working-class Belgians when the contents of his safes were demanded. Three other prominent men were dragged off to Germany, merely because they

had raised a fund for some starving labourers, who, having refused to work for the Germans, had no means of support. Numerous incidents of inconceivable brutality, though of character now too commonly known to bear repetition, were related to me by those who endured these punishments. Such was the experience of a Belgian, the Mayor of Haux, who told us verbally how he had been chained to a mitrailleuse and made to go forward before the German troops facing an Allied attack.

In regard to the Teutonic hatred for everything English, the following ridiculous instance will show to what extremes German tactlessness attempted to carry its usurped authority. One day a number of Alimentation-Commission men, all Americans, were seated together in a café; and, as all mention of the war was, by their own decision, prohibited, were jovially recounting reminiscences of happier times. Not far from them sat five young officers stiffly upright in gilt-buttoned parade dress and high red collars. They constantly turned their sheared heads to cast severe glances at the merry group who, though noting the angry eyes flashing under pale, knitted brows, paid no attention. Even then, although the Marne had checked their confident and boastful progress, all members of Germany's army, however young or inexperienced in action, assumed the bombastic manner of world-conquering Napoleons and, as in this case, considered themselves endowed with right to suppress anyone whose behaviour displeased them. Under the very evident irritation of these five fresh products from the great central war-factory, the Americans' hilarity grew apace; but on account of the Commission they represented, care was taken to avoid the least offensive word or gesture that might excuse interference. Presently one of the Prussians arose—a fat, pale youth, whose bright blue jacket and trousers appeared likely to burst if he took a long breath—and swaggered toward them with important jangle of sword and spurs.

"You shall not speak English where officers of the German army are seated!" he ejaculated, through lips pale and quivering with rage.

"Indeed? Why not?" inquired one of the party, an athletic creature who could have pounded the little fatty to a pulp.

"Because *I* say it!" was the reply; "the English language is distasteful to us, and should be officially forbidden in Brussels."

"But it isn't!" retorted the other in Americanized German; "and I guess Uncle Sam would have something to say if you tried to stop us speaking our own language."

"You are all Americans?" demanded the Prussian, raising his tow-coloured head, like a proud bantam-cock, and taking them in with a supercilious glance.

No one replied, for the youth who first spoke to him had turned nonchalantly to continue his interrupted conversation with a companion.

"I ask are you all Americans?" repeated the bantam, his voice rising to a thin, high note, on which it broke.

"Yes, we *are*!" shouted another of the party, a hot-headed boy, fresh from college, who had had all he could endure of this inexcusable intrusion; "what have you to say about it? We are here to help feed the people you're starving!—the people you've ruined! And by Gad! if you try to stop our yap, you'll get more than is good for you! Get out! or——"

One of the older men laid a hand on him and whispered: "Shut up, will you! What is the use of making a row?"

"Well, I shan't be bullied! Because they have cannon and all manner of shooting things ready at hand, they think they can bullyrag the lot of us!"

"We are all members of the American Relief Commission," another announced, and called the officer's attention to a badge they all wore.

"*S'gut!*" muttered the intruder who, while probably not understanding all that had been said in English, evidently recognized defiance. "But don't talk so loud in public!" he added, turning away.

"We'll talk as loud as we like!" bellowed the defiant one, who understood German and now made an attempt to speak it. "And you can't stop us! We are not here as your slaves, *wissen Sie*! We're neutrals, but we stand for right! We stand for—for" Failing to find the desired word in German, he fell back on his own language and added in a crimson passion: "D—— little swine! I'd like to rub his face in the mud, where it should be!"

His loud voice had attracted the attention of others, and fearing to have scandal brought upon the Commission, his companions endeavoured to quiet him, and as soon as was consistent with dignity, got him out of the café.

Fortunately this incident occurred when the Prussian eagle had lost some tail-feathers and was hunched up a bit and on the moult. Otherwise even though natives of a country then neutral, these boys might have been dragged by armed men to the Kommandantur, which would probably have brought about serious trouble and consequent difficulties for the Commission.

Even German women in the city evidently considered it a proof of loyalty to their hate-preaching ruler to resent hearing the language of a race that had frustrated his ambitions for world-power. On one occasion when two young American women were seated in a tram talking quietly in their native tongue, they noticed two women opposite who glared at them inimically. Presently one called her companion's attention to them, and, catching their puzzled glance, remarked, quite loud in German: "Isn't it *tactless* of them to speak English in Brussels!"

Tactless! to speak a language dear to the Belgians, while the German tongue was racking their poor, harassed nerves every moment of the day!

That winter was one long series of pitiless impositions, and the execution or imprisonment of helpless inhabitants. Persons, in many cases afterwards proved innocent, were seized on the merest suspicion, or on the false information of an

enemy—not only the suspected one, but his entire family and every friend who innocently called at his house, not knowing of his arrest.

At times, in punishment for some individual's act, or because "*La Brabançonne*" was sung by a party of patriots on the Belgian King's fête-day, the few cafés doing business were closed, and we ordered to retire to our homes at sunset for one week or more. Occasionally such a command was given upon a trumped-up excuse in order that military movements could be carried out unperceived.

Nevertheless, flashes of hope gleamed out in encouraging rumours, coming no one knew whence, but spreading like wildfire through the city. Many, many times we heard from *la laitière*, *le boucher*, or *la blanchisseuse* how the Germans had been driven back into Belgium and were preparing a hasty retreat to their own land! Even as early as March 1915 their retreat from Brussels was represented as being so imminent that we were all anxious to secure one of the sentinel-boxes, striped with the German colours, which stood before all public buildings and were said to be for sale. These were desired as souvenirs, such as no inhabitant of Brussels would have wished for two years later, when the iron of oppression had gone too deep for anyone to want a reminder.

The Austrians were said to be *hors de combat*, finished, even before Italy entered the conflict! Germany was pictured as obliged to meet alone forces that she could not resist for more than a week! Then came news of Austrian victories, followed by the fall of Mort-Homme, and hope sank again to despair.

A short time later, refugees from a town on the Belgian border reached Charleroi, and word was brought that the Allies had taken the former town and were advancing rapidly toward Brussels. We at once began to prepare for them, and to welcome the young King back to his own! For days a wild but suppressed joy throbbed through the capital. Champagne was drunk in secret, with tears of glad emotion, to King Albert, the British, and the French.

I shall not attempt to state how many times during the first two years these glad tidings thrilled our hearts, only to be contradicted, after long suspense, by some disastrous event, proving that little or no progress—such as we could then understand as progress—had been made by the Allied forces. During that period, when France and England were obliged to lose time (since the former was organizing what strength she had, and the latter forming an army), we did not comprehend how strongly the enemy was rooting himself in occupied territory. We thought that, since the Germans had been so wonderfully checked at the Marne, it was only a matter of short time before they would be wholly worsted and we liberated. In those days, consequently, no news seemed too good to be true, and we accepted all with delighted confidence.

From our town residence close to the Bois, we could hear the constant thunder of cannon, and during days of happy anticipation it was music to our ears. Often we would stand listening to it, with a party of friends, exhilarated by the roar of some heavy gun that seemed to be hammering open the gates of our

prison—seemed like a mighty voice crying, "We are coming, we are coming—have courage!"

But when, time after time, good news proved false, that distant thunder became a torture to the nerves, and horrible to a mind capable of picturing, even dimly, the massacre and destruction it signified week after week, month after month. Often, during the night, it made the house tremble to its foundations, and set windows and ornaments rattling in such a manner that sleep was impossible. At others, the resounding earthquaking shocks gave place to a steady, terrific roar, like a constant rolling of heavy wagons over a stony road. This continued hour after hour through whole nights and days—the frightful "curtain-fire" eye-witnesses have so well described, whose ghastly thunder was in our ears when we fell asleep, and when we awoke, like the monotonous roar of an angry sea.

Meanwhile, life in the capital continued to be harassed by local tragedies and insupportable restrictions. Among these tragedies were the murders of Miss Cavell and Captan Fryatt, the condemnation of well-known and loved citizens to death or long periods of *travaux forcés*, the seizure of some friend's son, husband, mother, or sister, often on unproved suspicion, and, in other cases, because of brave effort to serve their unhappy land.

One of these—a Belgian woman of good birth—told me the following story. She, Madame de X——, and her daughter had undertaken to forward certain valuable information to the Belgian army, and convey orders from the absent Government to those representing it in the capital. Her daughter, Madame de Z——, a clever and charming young widow, managed, at great risk, to cross into Holland for this purpose,—the frontier was then less strictly guarded than later,—taking and bringing back documents of the most perilous character. The whole affair was managed with exceptional daring and skill. Not one of their most intimate friends suspected upon what they were engaged, and all precautions were planned beforehand in case of detection. Despite the number of German spies in both Belgium and Holland, Madame de Z—— crossed the frontier three times without, apparently, being suspected; but on the morning following her last trip, the affair took a more tragic turn.

That morning, after consigning the smuggled papers to her mother (who was to look them over and deliver them), Madame de Z—— left her home in order to convey a verbal message, which could not be entrusted to writing, to a man of prominence then engaged upon matters of vital importance to his country.

On returning from her mission an hour later, Madame de Z—— was shocked to perceive, when some distance away, that her house was surrounded by soldiers with fixed bayonets. For a moment she hesitated, fearing for her mother; but as the latter could not be gravely suspected, she concluded that the men had come in search of herself. Confident that Madame de X—— could meet the situation with cool-headed sagacity, she decided to hide, and allow her mother to explain her absence, as agreed in case of investigation.

Since the event was one constantly dreaded, they had planned to meet it in this

wise: Madame de Z——'s married sister, who closely resembled her, was to live at their château in the country until all had been accomplished, and detection need no longer be feared. In case Madame de Z—— should be suspected, she, if she could escape capture, was to go to her sister's town residence and pass as her sister, stating that she herself, Madame de Z——, was residing in the country, and had been there long enough to prove an alibi. The sister, meanwhile, was to wear clothes identical with her own, a matter not likely to cause comment, as both were in deep mourning for the latter's husband, shot with other civilians at Francorchamps, near Liège, where they passed their summers.

Consequently Madame de Z—— hastened to her sister's house, and explained in part her danger to the old butler, a loyal creature who might well have been entrusted with the whole secret. But Madame de Z—— could run no risks, and allowed him to believe she and her family were under suspicion because of vengeful sentiments openly expressed after her tragic bereavement.

The mother, Madame de X——, was unfortunately occupied in looking through the perilous papers when the Germans arrived at her house. So absorbed was she that the sound of hurried steps in the corridor failed to arouse her. She raised her eyes from the documents only when a panting housemaid entered the room without knocking, and whispered excitedly: "*Les Allemands, Madame!* they are now mounting the stairs!"

There was no time for escape, no time even to conceal the papers; for two officers—to whose summons another maid had responded—after demanding to see Madame de Z——, ignoring the response that she was not there, glanced into a room on the first floor, then rapidly strode up the stairway.

Though paling slightly on hearing this, Madame de X—— quickly gained possession of herself.

"*Bien*," she said aloud, "let them come in," and added low: "Go out, Jeanne, and watch for my daughter; warn her not to return."

While speaking, she slipped the papers under the embroidered cover of a small work-table by which she sat; on this she set a work-basket, took out a half-finished bit of embroidery, and was calmly engaged with it when the officers appeared at the door, bowed, and entered.

"We wish to see Madame René de Z——," said one, the superior; "and, as we know she is in this house, any attempt to conceal her will only make matters more grave for her and for you. You are her mother, I believe, Madame de X——, *n'est-ce pas*?"

Madame de X——, with well-feigned astonishment, stared at the speaker before replying: "I am Madame de X——, Monsieur, but my daughter is not here."

"Good! You will not be advised; then we must search the house."

"Monsieur, I have no power and no wish to prevent you; but may I ask why you wish to see my daughter?"

Without replying, the officer, who had been speaking French, said something in German to his companion. The latter retired, and going below, called in two of the soldiers on guard without. With these he began a systematic search of the house, from cellar to garret. Every cupboard, drawer, and wardrobe was opened and ransacked, every bed and table looked under; even garments hanging in wardrobes were taken out and examined, as was afterwards related with much amazement by the maid, who imagined that Madame de Z—— was the sole object of their search!

Meanwhile the officer who had addressed Madame de X—— remained behind, standing with hat on, his small blue eyes fixed keenly on her refined, naturally pale face, which wore a serenely dignified expression of troubled wonderment. Her white hair, beautifully dressed, the lines of sorrow that marked her well-bred countenance, and her mourning raiment dignified the rôle of innocence she played with admirable ability, while her nerves were strained to their utmost tension by the knowledge that proof of her guilt lay within reach of this man's hand!

"You ask why I wish to see your daughter," he said when they were alone. "Good! I shall tell you: your daughter, Madame, is a spy!"

He watched the effect of this purposely abrupt statement and saw a look of shocked amazement come to his hearer's face.

"A spy! What do you mean?" she gasped. "*Savez-vous ce que vous dites?*"

"Perfectly. She is precisely that! We have incontestable proof that Madame René de Z—— has crossed the frontier twice, with important information for the enemy, and has brought into this city written matter from the former Government of Belgium."

Madame de X—— stared, then smiled wanly. "Ah, Monsieur, I fear you have been very wrongly informed. However eager my daughter and I might be to serve our unhappy land, alas, women of our station have not the nervous strength, even had we the courage for such deeds!"

"You may be ignorant of the fact; I trust you are, for your own sake; but your daughter has shown both the strength and the courage. She has done this thing; we know it beyond all possibility of doubt, and not only she, but you and all related to her must pay the penalty unless you confess. Confession now will save you much suffering."

Madame de X—— took up the embroidery that had fallen with her hands; "I may be physically weak, Monsieur, and unfit for daring deeds," she said quietly, "but, had a daughter of mine done that with which your suspicions honour her, no fear of pain would force me to confess."

"Your daughter must suffer the death penalty; do you realize that?"

"*Bien*—if I could believe her capable of doing this thing for Belgium, even her death and mine would not dim the pride of my last moment. But, oh, Monsieur,

I only ask let us not be sacrificed without the glory! Let proof be found before we are made to suffer as I know others have suffered."

"Madame, I have told you we have the proof."

"Of what?"

"Of your daughter's guilt."

"May I ask what proof?"

"It is known that she crossed the frontier on the sixth of last month, and returned on the tenth; she crossed again on Monday of this week and returned last night, bearing papers which are now in this house."

These statements, although not quite correct, were startlingly near the truth; but Madame de X—— betrayed no sign of their effect upon her.

"My daughter Amelia!" she ejaculated. "But, Monsieur, she has not been to this house for over a month; she is heart-broken and dwells in absolute retirement at our château beyond Boitsfort. Ah, doubtless you are ignorant of the catastrophe she and we all have lately suffered!"

"*Ja—ja!*" interrupted the officer, stirring uncomfortably; "I know her husband incurred his death by rash and guilty action. In these times mercy can be shown to no one who is guilty."

Madame de X—— raised her head and fixed on him a pair of scornful dark eyes. "Her husband, Monsieur, was innocent of the smallest crime; he did not even know your troops had entered Belgium. He was shot, it was said later, to avenge a stupid peasant's act! If my daughter is to suffer the same fate, then, I beg of you, extend your vengeance to me; for such sorrows craze the mind and are likely to make criminals of the best of us!"

Although, unlike Madame de Z——'s husband, who had done nothing, the speaker was aware of her own guilt, her words expressed the bitter grief that enabled her and her daughter to risk their lives, not only to serve their country, but to avenge a crime that had broken their hearts.

"My dear Madame," returned the officer, somewhat impressed by her sincerely tragic tone, "there is no question of vengeance in this matter. Indeed, my sympathy is so greatly with you, I should gladly serve you to the full extent of my power. It is, I know, dreadful for a mother to see her loved child condemned to be shot as a criminal, unable even to bid her a last farewell."

The woman's hands trembled slightly, but, noting it, she took scissors from the work-basket and calmly cut the silk from her needle, rethreaded it, and began work on another flower as she remarked quietly: "I cannot anticipate such a horror on false evidence. Surely you will take time, you will investigate the matter thoroughly before condemning her!"

"Naturally; but before we leave this house positive proof will be in our hands."

She glanced up, apparently mystified. “A proof you will find here—in my house!”

“Yes, Madame; the papers your daughter brought here last night.”

“Oh!” She smiled again, the pathetic mirthless smile of baffled innocence. “If those papers are here, Monsieur, you have full liberty to find them.”

“Where did your daughter go to-day?” he asked abruptly.

“Which daughter?”

“Madame de Z——”

“I had no idea she had gone anywhere. Surely if she left the château she would come to see me! Her sister was here last night and said nothing of my daughter Amelia having left the country.”

“Her sister is Madame de R——, is she not?”

“Yes, Madame Charles de R——.”

“And she was here to see you last night?”

“She passed the night with me, as I was not well, and returned early this morning to her house on rue de Bellevue.”

The officer grunted and, for the first time, looked away from her, glancing thoughtfully about the room.

Madame de X—— noted the change in his face, and, after some moments of silence, said quietly: “Will you not be seated, Monsieur?” and indicated a chair near her.

He sat heavily, laying sword across his knees and remarked, after a pause: “This is a sad business, and very distasteful to me.”

“I can well imagine so, Monsieur,” she returned, with a touch of irony he did not notice.

“If you would be absolutely frank, I am sure the matter might be smoothed over—at any rate the punishment might be less severe. The idea of a woman being shot is appalling; I should like to prevent that.”

“Oh, if justice be done I have no fear of such an event. But if a woman be guilty it is my conviction, Monsieur, that she should suffer even as a man. Women *have* been shot here in Brussels; among others, the Englishwoman, who died so bravely, and Gabrielle Petit.”

“*Ach, ja!*” He stirred again, and looked at the ceiling.

“Her crime was far less than that you accuse my daughter of,” pursued Madame de X——; “therefore if Amelia were guilty, I could have no hope, Monsieur; and surely nothing could make me more frank than I have been with you. I have sought to hide nothing; you may search where you will, and may even send for my two daughters to corroborate what I have said.”

At this moment the other officer appeared, and announced, in German, that his search had been fruitless.

"Good!" muttered his superior, rising; then, addressing Madame de X——, said formally:

"I must demand to search this room, Madame."

"Certainly," she replied; "here are the keys of my desk and the cupboard." She took two keys from the pocket of a small black silk apron she wore, and handed them to him.

The soldiers were then bidden to enter, and the search began. Not only was her desk examined and every letter in it opened, but each volume in the book-cases was taken out and looked through; the cushions and upholstery of sofa and chairs were examined; the carpet was pulled up at the edges, and every cranny and crevice, where a paper might be hidden, investigated.

And all that seemingly endless time Madame de X—— sat listening to the wild beating of her heart, thrilled through with terror as one or other of the men approached the little table where the papers they sought lay hidden only by a flimsy embroidered cover!

Had her hair not been white, it would certainly have become so during that period of moral anguish and suspense; but, in recounting it, Madame de X—— affirmed she was scarcely conscious of peril; the strain was so intense she lost sight of its cause and seemed to suffer more physically than mentally. Each movement of the men acted painfully upon her nerves, and though her hands still moved, mechanically plying the needle, her very muscles seemed to stiffen; she felt petrified and unable to move her head or body.

The men did their work in silence, but she could hear their breathing, and now and then a cough or throaty sound that shocked her like the discharge of a gun. During the whole procedure she noted that the superior was secretly watching her; and, fearing he might detect terror in her attitude, she made a mighty effort to change it easily. But she dared not rise from that table, whereon lay the price of her daughter's life and her own.

When everything had been examined to the chief officer's satisfaction, he muttered something to his men, and, approaching Madame de X——, laid his hand on *the little table*!

"What is in this, Madame?" he demanded.

"That?" she replied, with a calm that surprised herself; "only embroidery-silks and things of that sort—it is my work-table."

"There is a drawer in it, *n'est-ce pas*?"

"No, Monsieur, it opens at the top."

Though this was the crisis of all, Madame de X—— stated that a strange calm of indifference came over her; a conviction that the end had come gave her the recklessness of despair.

The soldiers, at that moment, were busy replacing books in the bookcase; the other officer, at her desk, was putting together certain letters of wholly innocent character he thought might be of service later on.

"I should like to look into the table, if you please," said the chief.

"*Bien.*" She lifted her work-basket and, handing it to him, said: "Will you kindly set that on the other table?"

As he, while examining the basket's contents, turned to do this, she swept the table-cover with the papers under it into her lap. Scarcely was this done, when he turned; and quickly lifting the lid, she remarked, looking up innocently, with the smile now familiar to him: "Its contents are not likely to interest a soldier, I fear."

He put his hand in and felt through the silks, then drew it out quickly, pierced by a needle!

"Good!" he said harshly, his face reddening. Then, when the pain passed: "Thank you, Madame. So far we have found nothing incriminating, but nevertheless you must come with me at once to the Military Governor."

"Go with you!" she gasped, fearing to rise because of those papers in her lap; "but why, Monsieur? For what reason do you arrest a woman of my age, against whom you have no charge?"

He raised his shoulders. "Our reasons, Madame, are not usually given. You must be imprisoned until this matter is fully investigated; that is all I shall say. If you wish to go to your room to dress, you may do so; but I must ask you to be as quick as possible."

The unyielding dryness of his tone told her argument would be futile, and, in a last desperate effort to save the situation, she gathered up her apron, in which lay embroidery, table-cover, and papers, and left the room in proud silence, determined to benefit by the moment of privacy allowed her, and destroy the papers. The officer, after ordering one of the soldiers to examine the chair she had occupied, said something to the other, who, with him, followed her from the room.

As she mounted the stairs, Madame de X——, to her horror, perceived that the second soldier mounted close in her wake. This she knew meant ruin! It meant that the last possible chance to rid herself of the fatal documents was to be denied her; for, taught by the experience of others, she knew every inch of the apparel she wore or discarded would be minutely examined. Consequently, by some means or other, the soldier must be prevented from accompanying her to her room. A plea for consideration, however, was not likely to be granted,

and rebellion would only incur greater severity. She paused and glanced back, thinking frantically what to do. Suddenly an idea came to her.

"Monsieur," she said, with obvious embarrassment, "this man *cannot* accompany me! You have examined every inch of my house; you have cross-questioned me and my servants, and read my intimate letters! Everything has been freely yielded to your investigation, therefore I must beg you to recall this man for a little moment. I am an old woman; I have urgent need of a moment of privacy."

"Good!" was the colourless reply; "He will await you in the corridor and accompany you to your room."

This being all she could hope for, and more than would have been accorded had her acting been less perfect or the slightest clue discovered, Madame de X——, followed by the soldier, went on to the floor above. There the soldier, looking bored and miserable, awaited her by the door of a small compartment at the end of the corridor.

One moment later those documents which the enemy would have prized—which would have condemned Madame de X—— and her daughter to death—were driven, by a resounding rush of water, into oblivion down the drain-pipe!

But their contents she retained in her memory, and later found means of communicating them to those for whom they were destined—I believe during her imprisonment, but am not sure of this point.

The consequence of her heroic courage was the exoneration—after painful and lengthy imprisonment—of both women, as no proof could be found of their guilt. But it is doubtful whether condemnation to death could have caused more anguish than Madame de X—— suffered during those hours of desperate peril! Among the many great deeds of Belgian heroism few are more deserving of admiration than the brave and clever fidelity of these two daring women to the confidence reposed in them.

VII

A

ALTHOUGH time passed somewhat less dully than later, the incidents that, during the winter and summer of 1915, relieved our otherwise monotonous days were of such distressing character that they only deepened the gloom. One by one our British friends were carried off to Rühleben, while their wives were left behind without sufficient means—in some cases absolutely destitute, since they could receive nothing from without, and were consequently worse off than the really impoverished Belgians, for whom charity provided. For months at a stretch, this monotony of misery was broken by nothing more encouraging than bad news from the front, and the tragic events at the *Tir National*, where citizens were

shot for patriotic deeds, seldom graver than that of Miss Cavell, or the brave Belgian girl Gabrielle Petit, twenty-one years of age. She, however, was given a chance of having her punishment commuted to imprisonment, but declined this favour which had been denied the Englishwoman. The murder of Miss Cavell caused a pervading mood of mourning that seemed unlikely ever to diminish, even in those who did not know her personally. That crime, so pitilessly carried out, in secrecy and under cover of false promises, was perhaps most appalling to those in the vicinity whose hopes were stimulated by misleading assurances, until the post-mortem announcement proved them vain! Although a British subject has referred to the deed as rather a "blunder" than a crime,—she being proven guilty of having assisted young men across the frontier,—the fact that other women, not British, found guilty of the same humane, although forbidden, acts, were yet spared the extreme punishment reserved for spies and the worst of treason, takes all logic from the argument of this apparently prejudiced Irishman. Edith Cavell's martyrdom impressed us in Brussels, as it must always impress history, not only as shortsighted stupidity—the very determination, secrecy, and haste with which it was perpetrated contradicts such interpretation—but rather as a deliberate and atrocious act of vengeance toward a hated nation!

But other tragedies followed so quickly that this one gradually became lost in the mass of appalling incidents related by relatives of those who suffered, or widely announced in German *affiches* in order to strike fresh terror to the hearts of a sorrowing and helpless people.

Yet hope lived on; despite the prevailing misery, each gleam of good news that reached us from the front was magnified to a great victory for the Allies, and twenty-four hours sufficed to develop the conviction that a glorious and triumphant peace was about to be proclaimed.

Secret organizations in Belgium occasionally brought us a ray of encouragement, despite the twenty thousand German civilians endeavouring to discover and destroy these sources of information opposed to what was allowed to appear in our papers. But, by dint of passing from mouth to mouth, the news became so distorted or exaggerated that one scarcely knew what to believe.

We all had maps spread over our walls, on which every mile that the British and French advanced was marked with pins bearing little flags of the nations. For how many months—*years*, indeed—we pored over that line as it crept closer and closer to St. Quentin, Cambrai, and other points considered the keys to a rapid and overwhelming victory! I cannot recall them without painful recollection of our many disappointments.

In the spring of 1918 we put those maps out of sight, and ceased reading the communiqués vouchsafed us by a German press.

The most trying element of all, in regard to the front, was the *authentic* information we received by word of mouth, as early as December 1916, of the taking of Courtrai, St. Quentin, etc., by the Allied armies. The stirring account grew as it passed from one excited recounter to another. It was originally obtained,

as stated above, from some unknown but trustworthy source. But later on we came to believe that these stories were, in great part, spread by the Germans in order to weaken and destroy what faith and hope still survived in the country. I heard soldiers, even at this time, express very gloomy views as to their nation's prospects in the war. Once in a tram, just before the last temporarily successful onslaught of the Germans at Verdun, I heard one, who pretended he was drunk and had possibly been taught the words in French, cry out hysterically: "Our cause is lost! *Nous sommes fichus! Nous sommes fichus!*"

For some reason beyond the comprehension of civil minds the occupying Government appeared bent upon destroying every vestige of hope in Belgian hearts. Invariably on the eve of a German victory, exhilarating rumours of great Allied successes were set forth from unknown sources awakening joy in the prison city which often verged on an outburst of dangerous enthusiasm. Then, as invariably, the blazing blue *affiche* appeared, announcing an overwhelming defeat of the Allies in the very section where they were understood to have been successful.

The subtle trickery of such tactics might in time have attained its object; certainly there could be no better method of wearying and torturing a people into losing faith. And while it did not succeed with the better classes, it tired and broke the spirit of the suffering poor to such an extent that, even when positive proof of successes reached us, they would not believe; for they had come to the conviction that the Germans were invincible and would never give up an inch of Belgium.

We who had witnessed the easy and rapid advance of the enemy through Belgium and deep into France, cut off as we were from all reliable information, could not, during the first years, form any idea of the vastly differing conditions affecting the Allied armies. As the Germans, opposed only by hastily-mustered, unorganized, and infinitely weaker forces, had swept on so quickly, we looked for like speed from the Allies when once their strength was massed and ready. That the enemy had had time to root himself in and fortify his positions almost invulnerably, while England was forming an army of untrained men, and France was preparing hers, we did not comprehend until later. Few details reached us from the outer world, although during the first year a London *Times* was occasionally smuggled in. A *Times*! No one outside can realize what that meant to us! The poor sheet, usually more than a week old, passed surreptitiously from hand to hand, was reduced to a flimsy rag before reaching its last reader! Enormous prices were paid for it. The members of the Anglo-American club paid a hundred francs for one copy which contained nothing of importance, but was nevertheless of inestimable value to us as a voice from friendly regions whence, week by week, we were further cut off. But soon these rare and precious journals appeared no more; and the apparently innocent newsvendors who shouted aloud: "*La Belgique!*"—and whispered, when someone known to be trustworthy passed: "*Le Teems, Monsieur?*"—no longer added the zest of dangerous intrigue to our saunterings through the dull streets.

But tales of heroic deeds done by the Belgians afforded a certain interest and satisfaction; tales only whispered to those who could be trusted not to repeat

them. And many were performed by the Flemish, whom the Germans boasted they had won to their side. One may be given to illustrate the real sentiments of these people, so falsely represented in the German accounts. At Bruges, where the Flemish element predominates, an old man, for many years foreman in the unloading, etc., of canal boats, approached my friend the steel manufacturer in that town, gruffly complained that the Allies were making a mistake in bombarding the railroads from aeroplanes, since the Germans were shipping their ammunition and so forth exclusively by the canal, and asked the manufacturer if there was no means of sending them word to this effect. The latter, not wishing to betray himself, but meaning to attempt it, said he knew of no such means. Whereupon the old Fleming withdrew, muttering discontentedly, with bowed head and great bushy brows knitted over a pair of clever dark eyes, meditating mischief.

A few hours later, German officers came in hot haste to the manufacturer, and, in a frenzy of rage and excitement, made him accompany them to the canal. There a great crowd had gathered about the old foreman, who was under arrest, and threatened with death. He appeared stupidly indifferent to the menaces and curses heaped upon him by the infuriated Teutons, merely repeating over and over:

"I could not help it!—An accident!—I did my best!"

For some moments my friend, dazed by the reigning confusion, was unable to understand what it was all about, until, led by an officer to the canal bank, he saw the cause of their rage. He was so much affected by amusement mingling with a deeper emotion that a lump rose to his throat, and he could not speak.

The old foreman, as though by accident, had managed to let drop the hook of his great iron crane just as a boat, carrying a vast German war-cargo, was passing by. It caught the boat so firmly by the nose that, in his pretended efforts to free it, he not only overturned the bulky vessel, but dragged down his crane, which, with the boat, sank into the canal, blocking it against all navigation for nearly five weeks! He did this at the risk of his life, and only his able pretence of stupidity, and the manufacturer's representation that he was in his dotage, won for him a term of imprisonment instead of the extreme penalty.

The brave passage of young Belgians over the frontier to join their army caused the barriers of our prison to be more closely guarded. Those who still ventured to cross—and there were many even after the deadly electric wires had been installed!—did so with scarcely a chance for their lives. Boys as young as seventeen ran the gauntlet of that "death-zone," and many passed it in safety after incredible endurance and suffering.

A Belgian woman, whose two sons made a daring attempt to pass, told us their experience, related to her in part by one of their companions, obliged by illness to return; and in part by the German officer who coldly informed her of their fate.

After skulking for four days and nights under cover of a wood in the Campine, devoid of food, save what little they carried in their pockets, and exposed to incessant autumn rains, they at last reached a canal lying between them and Dutch territory. Having no other means of crossing, they plunged at night into the black water, and struck out for the opposite shore.

The mother, not hearing of their capture, which would have been widely published, concluded, after several days, that they had got over safely. But one morning she was startled by the visit of a German sub-officer who came to announce that one of her sons had been shot while swimming the canal.

As she pretended ignorance of his intention to cross, the information was considered sufficient punishment, especially when, several days later, the tidings of her other son's death in like manner was conveyed to her by the same pitiless messenger.

This was the most tragic incident of the sort I heard first-hand at that time; but tales as sad, or others picturing the glorious success of such young heroes, were constantly circulating.

Later, when the electric wires and underground mines were installed, the matter was differently managed. By a carefully-organized plan, the boys were able to pass over in companies of twenty, thirty, and more at a time, each one contributing his share to the large bribe by which the sentinels were bought off.

Once, when, before this rare privilege was wholly withdrawn, my companion was permitted to go by motor into Holland on business, he was surprised to meet, in the little Dutch town of Nispen, a Belgian acquaintance whom he believed to be in Brussels. He and thirty companions had been safely conducted over the frontier the night before! Three thousand one hundred francs, one hundred from each member of the party, had secured them this easy passage. The youths, now free and eager for revenge, were glad to regain liberty at so small a price, and be able to join their colours. While he was relating this in the street, he noticed a crowd gathered about two German soldiers, unresistingly arrested by the Dutch police.

The young Belgian, on seeing them, uttered an exclamation: "*Mon Dieu!*" he said. "Those are our sentinels!—the men who led us over last night!" They hastened to the group, and the soldiers, recognizing him, grinned and nodded in a friendly manner.

"What are you doing here?" he asked them genially, for the men were evidently good-natured creatures, not reared in the army, whose military sympathies were apparently no deeper than their uniforms.

"Got tired of it over there!" returned one, still smiling. "We are not so free as you are, but we can wait for that more comfortably here than in Belgium!"

During the summer of 1916 the inhabitants of Brussels, weary of suffering and the "hope deferred which maketh the heart sick," began a rather forced effort to

brighten their existence. When, after a bitterly gloomy winter, the first peep of green became visible in the Bois, it seemed as though a tremor of new life passed through the city. War, with its ever-recurring calamities and disappointments, had come to be looked on as an unalterable affliction, which must be endured with patience until some unforeseen and unimaginable event should bring it to an end. Confidence in early and rapid victory had gradually given place to a less definite though stubborn belief in final triumph; but now even this was less openly expressed. War, in fact, became a tacitly avoided subject of conversation. The tedious communiqués, giving only such details as the Government thought fit to present, were no longer discussed, even by bereaved and serious folk whose thoughts were ever at the front. We who, as yet, were spared the crape worn by so many, began to frequent tennis and golf clubs, where, while healthfully exercising on the courts, or "chasing a pill through a pasture"—as the Irishman defined golf!—we tried to forget that the air we breathed came to us over acres of death.

The Bois became alive again with children and pleasure-seeking couples; and although there were no horses to drive or ride, boats were launched, as of old, on the beautiful lake surrounding an island café, which reopened its doors to serve, not the dainty repasts of former days,—edibles were far too dear!—but tea and coffee of sorts, while procurable, and a light home-made beer. One lump of sugar was allowed to each cup, and no appeal or bribe could secure more. But in a short time the place was crowded, not only by Belgians, but German soldiers who mingled freely with them, seeking relief from the dull routine of their days of rest.

One of the touching sights of this little island retreat was that of these weary, battle-soiled men, to whose clothes still clung the mud and grime of the trenches, delightedly visiting the dovecot, where, for ten centimes, they procured grain to feed the pigeons. These pure white birds, emblems of peace and beauty, would settle on their hands, shoulders, and heads; and through their snowy plumage the men's gruesome, green-grey uniforms appeared like the thought of an evil mind, marring the spiritual accord between God and man.

This reawakening of the people was a natural reaction—the demand of life for its own rights. As with individuals, sorrow's tedium had evoked in the entire occupied country a certain helpless resignation to circumstances that after two years' patient endurance and discouragement offered no promise of change. Oppression and deprivation had become permanent elements of existence. Tragedies even failed to impress us so deeply as of yore; incidents of heart-breaking pathos no longer brought tears to the eyes of those who could still dress warmly in winter, and indulge adequately, if not luxuriously, in the high-priced food. All had made such sacrifices for the poorer classes as each considered possible without serious menace to himself. Many had given the last centime they could spare, others substantial donations which they probably did not miss.

Nevertheless, evidences of distressing want increased, more especially among

those too proud to ask alms, who, before the war, had been comfortably off.

During that summer and the following winter these once well-to-do and industrious citizens swelled the long lines of hunger-driven, ill-clad beings who, in rain, snow, or sunshine, stood for hours outside soup-kitchens to obtain the loaf of bread and jug of hot broth provided by charity. I think no visible sign of the country's calamity was more painfully impressive than the sight of those silent, patient files of heterogeneous humanity, extending at certain hours along whole blocks of the city's streets. Chiefly were they eloquent during the early dusk of winter, when, exposed to the blast of cold winds, to sleety rain, or penetrating fog, refined men and women, old and young, stood shivering side by side with the lowest inhabitants of rue Haute!

Some faces seen in those sad gatherings I shall never forget; faces of haggard, hopeless men, whose brave efforts to live honestly had been frustrated when success was almost attained; of wan women, whose husbands were dead or fighting in the trenches, whose children starved in a heatless home; old women and young, in whose eyes all human reasoning was eclipsed by an animal hunger—old men and young with that same anguish in their eyes, but with the hard and morose expression of embryo criminals lurking about their down-drooping, sullenly closed lips.

Ah, only those who lived in the midst of Belgium's agony, who beheld a guiltless people verily crucified as recompense for their loyalty to honour and truth, can fully appreciate the wrong that was done them! Only those who saw with their own eyes the callous and inhuman rage of the invader's earlier treatment,—when, confident of conquering a startled world with every diabolical device of destruction which mind could conceive, he ignored all laws, and deliberately aimed at crushing the very heart of this little land that had done no wrong,—only those can understand with what contempt, what *loathing*, we who did witness it came to look upon the ruler and the chiefs of that race whose history has been thus stained! For we saw these people starving while Germany was seizing their crops, their horses, cows, even the contents of dry-goods and other shops; shipping away the coal, for need of which so many perished during the cold winters; taking all fats, so that butter was unprocurable and milk too rare and dear for the poor to buy. We beheld the famished mothers struggling to keep their fading children alive on what charity could provide—so small a portion for each of the many thousands to be cared for!—the country's youth stricken down with tuberculosis, and honest men driven to thieving and crime!

Indeed, the bare sight of those lines of hunger-wan creatures, stretching like black stains through the city, awoke depressing conjectures as to whether man's intelligence was, after all, of a higher order than that of beasts, or merely the same limited capacity, artificially burnished! Through nearly two-thirds of the civilized world, life, beauty, and the harvests of ages were being ruthlessly and insanely destroyed; every principle of right, every element of higher sentiment scorned or ignored, in a senseless and hideous conflict between men—between the most exalted of all living creatures! Truth, the acknowledgment of a higher

Power, and even kindred sympathy—manifested even by the lowest animals—were sacrificed day after day to an atrocious passion, costing millions of lives, billions of wealth, and a loss in treasures, in architecture, literature, and art such as a thousand years of labour can never replace!

What wonder that individuals did not escape the almost universal retrogression, and that, amid a people who had so nobly stood loyal to their ideals, dishonesty and contempt for law gradually developed from the festering and unalleviated wounds unjustly dealt them!

Signs of this inevitable consequence of war became apparent later, not only in Brussels, but throughout the whole of Belgium, as in Russia and (more or less) in all the involved nations.

War! who after this can ever again insult patriotism by relating it to the beat of drums and the roar of cannon? Every rational being who has witnessed its dire and degrading effects, even in so small a scene as the prison-capital of its vast tragic stage, must curse those philosophic minds of Germany who exerted their intellects to exalt intellect's most horrible opponent, and sold their souls to the devil for a vain Emperor's praise!

On them, as much as on him they flattered, must be laid the crime of a catastrophe that has menaced the very foundations of civilization. Where now can be seen the benefits of that "drastic medicine for the human race" which Treitschke informs us must always recur by the Almighty's will? He pretends that war is elevating because the individual disappears before the great conception of the State, and that to check war would be "a perversion of morality," in that it would abolish heroism! Is heroism more beautiful or advantageous when *forced* from a man on the battlefield, than when, of his own will, he proves it in a peaceful struggle to live righteously and let others live?

How many criminals, for selfish objects, have evinced personal courage like that of a soldier in action?—far greater, because not in obedience, but in opposition to power! Paid or commanded heroism is not heroism in the true sense. Thousands upon thousands in the peaceful walks of life have more worthily deserved glory by labour and sacrifice for the common good than they who are driven, under command, to slay their kind—who obey for no clearly-comprehended object, but first and foremost to preserve themselves. There are perhaps fifty men in five hundred, apart from the officers, whose dominant incentive in battle is other than self-preservation; whereas in peace one-half, if not more, of a like body of men utilize their physical and intellectual powers for the improvement of general conditions—and often without aiming at other recompense. The hour for lauding the soldier above the scientist and artisan is long since past, and vast military power, or military power of any sort, is a mockery of the present glorious age.

Can there be any more absurd sophistry than that of pretending that war corrects egoism? War is bred of egoism, bred of the cruellest of all egoisms—imperial ambition! In peace the basest selfishness is less harmful than the selfishness of international conflict. Even those men who have amassed enormous fortunes by

robbing the poor have been of greater benefit to the world in general than if their intelligence and force had been utilized in planning how to crush another nation. Egoism, after all, is necessary to progress, and war is but its most barbaric expression.

Machiavelli's assertion that power is the keynote of all policy has been grasped by the German war-philosophers, who flatter themselves they see clearly when looking upon the present epoch through the eyes of an unscrupulous fifteenth-century Italian. Machiavelli perhaps spoke truth for his time—a truth, moreover, still real for our own; but his word *power* has now a different significance. Now only is the power of reason generally developed; now only the many nations of the world speak the same moral language; now only the masses, formerly forced to be war-like animals, are thinking and, to a great extent, cultured beings.

But what is the use of reiterating what every thoughtful mind has heard crying to-day over the bleeding earth? That Reason which vast catastrophes invariably rouse to ephemeral life soon dies in the gathering storm-cloud of humanity's innately savage passions! If the race most boastful of its culture, a race which leapt so rapidly from the confining narrowness of old-time heresies, could give birth to the devastating horror that has reigned for nearly five years, and threatened to thrust the world back into medieval darkness, what faith can be placed in mere Reason? What faith can be placed in any human argument, ideal, or belief—what faith in Man himself?—The majesty of human intellect, before so deliberate a destruction of its own works, is made to appear no more than a vain invention of fancy; and the supreme creature of all knowable creation appears of no more enduring significance than as depicted by Lamartine: "Ce pauvre insecte c'est l'homme, qui chante quelques jours devant Dieu sa jeunesse et ses amours, et puis se tait pour l'éternité!"

VIII

W

WHEN the spring of 1916 was in full leaf an unexpected pleasure was accorded us: permission from the Governor to ride bicycles within certain stated limits! The privilege was welcomed almost joyously by all; for, since there were no horses and no means of transit for those living in the suburbs, or those out of touch with such trams as were running, many workers were obliged to walk miles each day to and from their places of occupation. Besides, the pleasure-hungry inhabitants—doomed to remain summer and winter within the gloomy city—were glad of a chance to make excursions into woods and open country without expense or too great fatigue. Every man, woman, and child able to pedal immediately planned how to purchase a wheel, although many were only able to do so after a long period of saving—by cutting down their food supply, and other sacrifices. There were, of course, not enough bicycles in the country to meet even

one-tenth of this suddenly-created demand, since most of the Belgian stock had been requisitioned for army purposes. But no sooner was the cheering permission given than the market was flooded, as though by magic, with wheels of all styles and all prices—*made in Germany*! Every shop was stocked to overflowing, sold out, and restocked with incredible rapidity.

In a short time the Bois, so long deserted and melancholy, presented a scene of life that did the heart good to see. Hundreds of bicycles, all bearing the Teuton trade-mark cleverly disguised, rolled gaily over the smooth asphalt of wide avenues, where the splendid automobiles of former days no longer deterred the timid; where, at that time, not even a German car or vehicle of any sort impeded their way.

So great was the pleasure and benefit afforded, especially to wan, undernourished shop-girls and lads, in sad need of fresh air and some diversion in their joyless existence, that one was tempted to feel more kindly toward the occupying Government, until, later on, the subtle and selfish aim became known of this sole act of seeming consideration. Nevertheless, during those summer months a surprising spirit of comparative gaiety developed. The conflict raging without seemed temporarily forgotten. Young and old indulged to the full the delight of wheeling along smooth cycle tracks (laid before the war) through leafy woodlands out to Groenendael and other picturesque spots in the environs, where restaurants, that had done no business for two years, gladly welcomed them.

Whole families were to be seen awheel; fathers and mothers, accompanied by children of all ages. Loving couples, even elderly women and white-haired men, experienced the first semblance of pleasure and liberty since the 20th of August 1914. On Sundays, especially, this manifestation of reawakened life was delightful to see. From morn till eve the city avenues and those of the Bois were moving streams of radiant cyclists, eager to leave the town behind and taste the sweetness of summer under fragrant boughs, or in flowered fields where they would settle in parties for luncheon. Jeanne from the *laiterie*, Jacques from the butcher's shop—hundreds of poor, tired young creatures, who slaved on weekdays to provide themselves and war-widowed mothers with the necessities of life, were all there, smiling and forgetting the sacrifices made to procure a cheap German wheel—sacrifices often betrayed in their hunger-pinched faces! But the privilege was not indulged in only by these; the aristocrats welcomed it as gladly, and innumerable smart men and women, deprived of their horses and cars, pedalled along by the side of Jeanne and Jacques as contentedly as they.

I have no exact knowledge of how many bicycles were sold in Belgium during that summer; but judging by the fact that one was procured by every individual in the capital able to ride and scrape together the price, many thousands must have been sold in Brussels alone—all provided by Germany! A large number of the poorer classes could not save the necessary sum until the summer was over, and cold, bad weather prevented them enjoying their hard-earned acquisitions. But they had something to look forward to for the coming summer, should the

war continue—and there was then little prospect of it coming to an end!

These last, unfortunately, made their sacrifices in vain; for no sooner was everyone provided with a wheel, and the enormous demand, so cunningly created and provided for, had been satisfied, than the moment arrived for the sequel of Germany's clever commercial *coup*!

Immediately an order was published that everyone possessing a bicycle should not only declare but *deliver* his tyres, as the rubber was needed by the army! Riding was forbidden, even to those who, after yielding their tyres, asked permission still to enjoy their wheels by using tyres of rope!

Thus was solved the mystery of that one instance of kindness towards a wronged people! The German army secured the rubber without robbing its own nation; and, moreover, enriched certain home manufacturers with the pathetic savings of many a Belgian girl and lad, since fallen a victim to tuberculosis—an epidemic then already beginning to ravage their country's youth!

Of course the usual excuse was given for checking the use of bicycles: someone—who and how was not revealed!—had abused the privilege, therefore all should be denied it! But if, indeed, that abuse ever was committed, it must have been during the first weeks after permission to ride was given. No one, anxious to serve his country, or to escape, would have waited until the last importation of wheels had been disposed of! This, moreover, did not explain why permission was never again given, although during the two following summers there was no conceivable reason why those who asked to ride with rope tyres within a certain limited locality should be refused.

The whole affair was an abominable trick, subtly clever, with that sly and treacherous cleverness which won a vast advantage for the German army in the beginning, and has ever since characterized its policy.

The dark months of winter crept upon us; another joyless Christmas approached—a day suggesting not peace and good-will, but rather blasphemous mockery of all that Christ taught. One black day was like another, always throbbing with the more or less loud roar of distant cannon, stirred only when good news fanned to brief flame our almost extinguished hope. Only this, and the ever-new laws imposed by the enemy, made us realize we were yet alive, and roused us sufficiently to note what the day of the month might be.

Occasionally, however, we were awakened at dawn by a thunder of near-by cannon, and, until taught by experience, sprang from our beds thinking the Allies had come. But it was only to see puffs of exploding shell surrounding a bird-like form far up in the sky—which we recognized as a friendly aviator winging through the explosives toward a Zeppelin shed rather uncomfortably close to our house. Once, at dawn, several biplanes appeared bent upon destroying this monster civilian slayer. Brussels, still asleep, resounded to the thunder of cannon from the many points where high-angle guns were set, one of these points being a water-tower two hundred yards or so from us. The shooting was

continuous; and puffs of smoke, as the shells burst, surrounded the air-craft so closely it seemed impossible that they could escape destruction. Fragments of shell rained upon our roof, and crashed through the garden trees, while we, in our night-clothes, leaned from windows watching the brave flyers through our glasses. Our hearts almost ceased to beat, fearing lest one should fall; for it appeared almost beyond hope that they could all escape that determined and well-directed fire. Presently one descended into full view, and, after circling about the Zeppelin shed, slackened speed just above it. Shells burst round him on every side, but the intrepid aviator paid no heed. As we watched, scarcely breathing, he plunged downward close to the shed—hesitated—then, apparently in no great hurry, soared up like a fearless eagle to safer heights, through a very cloud of bursting shells. Almost immediately there was a tremendous explosion, which we scarcely heeded, so intent were we on his escape. For what seemed hours, though it was probably not more than a few moments, we followed his flight amid a storm of attack that seemed to miss him at times only by a hair's breadth.

In a villa facing ours dwelt a young American widow, who, with her two sons, as little clothed as we, was also watching the combat. One of the boys, as reckless of risk as he was indifferent to his attire, had crawled from a window, and stood, bare-footed, in pyjamas, on the roof cornice in great danger of being struck by falling bits of shell. The widow, wrought to uncontrollable excitement, called out as though the daring flyer could hear her: "For Heaven's sake hurry!—*Fly!*—Oh, they will bring you down!—God have mercy on him! Spare him! Spare him!"

Her cries came thinly to us, through the thunderous din, and, though she and we all laughed over it later, at that moment of tension nothing impressed us as extraordinary or comic. Every sense was centred on that rising form, until it finally disappeared in the mist of higher ether. Had he been brought down we should have all felt it as a personal tragedy; for, although at that time America was still comfortably neutral, we who had witnessed Belgium's martyrdom were little in sympathy with our country's attitude.

But this took place earlier; before the spring of 1917 the Machiavellian intelligence ruling us is supposed to have devised a means whereby it hoped to check aerial assaults upon these cherished perils-to-unprotected-towns. Although the trick was beyond all things diabolical, many in Brussels, taught by experience the inhumanity of Prussian war-methods, believed it was done with deliberate intention to terrify the inhabitants into opposing Allied aerial attack.

As the Zeppelin, unfortunately, was absent from its shed when a well-directed bomb was dropped on it during this attack, another attempt to destroy it was made later. During the latter raid several shrapnel shells tore with direful effect through the city's crowded streets. Many ghastly details reached us, but one account, given by an eye-witness, will serve to illustrate the vileness of a scheme which, if indeed intentional, can only be equalled by the sinking of the *Lusitania* and that shooting of the French wounded, openly recorded in the German papers, under the heading: "A day of honour for our troops"!

One of the shells, in its mad career through the city, struck a brewer's wagon, killing the driver, and the oxen which drew it, and severely wounded a second man. A physician in the vicinity hastened to the spot; and with those who gathered about the scene of butchery came two German officers who appeared already prepared for the event.

"*Ach!*" exclaimed one of these, in a tone of compassionate regret; "you Belgians can thank the British and French for this! What is it to them how many innocent beings are sacrificed to their senseless attacks in a vain effort to cripple us!"

But, all unknown to the speaker, several tell-tale bits of the murderous missile, proving it to be of German origin, had already been gathered up and secreted by the Belgians present. The physician had one of these, and, unable to control his fury on hearing this *malin* interpretation of the tragedy, he turned on the officer, his face white and quivering with reckless passion: "*Pas du tout!*" he cried; "no French or English hand committed this crime! Here is the proof!" He revealed the damning fragment. "Avions do not drop shrapnel, and neither you nor anyone can deny where that was made!"

The officers scorned the suggestion, but withdrew, for they were unsupported by others in the midst of a silent but enraged crowd.

One feature in the affair, which encouraged the belief that it had been arranged purposely, was that German soldiers immediately took possession of each locality where damage was done, ridding it of every condemning particle of shell. But fragments enough have been preserved by the Belgians as proof of a deed worthy only of those who committed it.

In constant view of such trickery how could a neutral attitude of mind or heart be retained?

The men of the American Alimentation Commission came to Belgium as friendly towards Germany as towards any other nation. Several of them, indeed, were somewhat biased in favour of the Prussian army, and all as prone as were we ourselves, in the beginning, to doubt the accounts of their atrocities. But before they left I believe there was not one whose last trace of respect for the occupying Powers was not destroyed by what he had witnessed with his own eyes during his sojourn in the country. Very many, as the world knows, lost no time, after leaving Belgium, to reveal their outraged sentiments by joining the Allied forces. Even before America came in, several of these gave their lives in fighting a wrong they were forced to recognize, despite their original determination to view all from a fair war-basis, and not be influenced by mere hearsay.

And yet these men were more closely associated with the German officials than with Belgians. Their duties necessitated constant intercourse with the Government, and with those whose influence might easily have counterbalanced Belgian accusations. Those stationed in the *étape* regions were constantly accompanied by a sub-officer. Day and night each had his "nurse," as the boys called these military supervisors, at his side; ate with him, travelled with him,

and slept near him! What more natural than that so intimate an association should strengthen their original admiration for the German army? But facts were too flagrantly against it. Little by little incidents, at first regarded as awful but possibly legitimate features of war, led to others, illegitimate and of enraging significance, gradually destroying, in these fair-minded men, all sympathy with the Central Powers.

As year followed year they saw these *soi-disant* defenders of their "*Vaterland*" bleeding a helpless country, and clinging, at all cost and by any means, to territory won through the use of poisonous gas and burning oil—brutalities never before known, and all fore-prepared, while the world was dreaming of peace!—saw them draining broken Belgium by outrageous taxation, and requisition of every kind, while doing their utmost to create internal strife between the Flemings and Walloons.

Very few neutrals at first could gauge the situation correctly in Brussels, where German argument and German lies were predominant. It was only their *actions* that opened our eyes, and the extraordinary advantages they so quickly attained, which gave evidence of an inexorable and vandalistic plan that could not have been brought to such perfection in a few months, nor even in a few years.

Only a fool or an all-forgiving angel could have lived under that domination and retained sympathy or respect for the nation it represented. Although noble individuals in Germany were probably as adverse as we to its pitiless barbarity and craft, the fact that no united voice in that great and prosperous country was raised against it, suggested that their number was too small to be of any avail. The first easy victories, the violation and crushing of a neutral land, seemed to have eclipsed the soul and intelligence of a people formerly so proud of their culture.

IX

T

THE winter of 1916-17 proved more trying even than that preceding it. After the tyres were taken, came a demand for copper, and everyone was ordered to convey to central depôts all the specified articles he possessed in this metal.

This meant, for Belgians, not only the deprivation of kitchen utensils and other things necessary to a household, but, even more bitter, it meant providing the enemy with material to slaughter brothers and friends. Consequently every means was resorted to to avoid obedience, without incurring the drastic punishment promised all who resisted. Copper was hidden under floors, in carefully-replastered and repapered walls, under the earth in gardens and under

coal in cellars—all such things as were then demanded, but, alas! not those demanded a short time later.

Treacherous servants rendered this defiance more perilous, as no one was sure not to be sold by a trusted butler or valet. The butler of one woman we knew had been with her for twenty years; and to him, as her husband and sons were at the front, she confided not only the hiding of copper but the fact that a younger son with her aid had crossed the frontier. He rewarded her confidence by insolently ignoring his position as servant and assuming an attitude of equality with her. Every order she gave was referred to another servant, while the butler sat comfortably in the drawing-room, smoking cigarettes in her presence! We ourselves were obliged to unearth our carefully buried copper at midnight and rebury it in another place owing to the dismissal of a gardener who had assisted at the first interment! Not that he threatened to betray us, and more than likely he would not have done so, but the consequences were too serious to risk.

Examples were made of those found to have hidden their copper, who not only had every particle of the metal taken, but in some cases were pillaged of all valuables, fined, and imprisoned. Neutrals were not exempt, and a story was told me of a Swiss family who offered resistance when their home was invaded by armed soldiers. After ordering the men out, they threatened to send for Belgian police, and were at once subjected to the most abominable treatment. Every ornament, lock, and door-handle of brass or copper was wrenched off; chandeliers were ruthlessly dragged from the ceilings; and the soldiers, after causing general havoc, announced, on departing, that a van would come the following day to take away piano, pictures, and other things of value. I cannot say if this threat was carried out, nor can I vouch for the story, as it came to me third-hand. But I myself witnessed one of these plundering raids, when a Belgian's house was entirely gutted, and can relate the experience of a Greek family told me by the daughter, whom I knew well. They too, as neutrals, ignored the order to deliver their household goods, and, since they had not attempted to conceal them, were astounded when the soldiers arrived.

"Why do you come to us who are in no way implicated in the war?" demanded the Hellenic matron; and the plunderer replied: "That is of no consequence; all must obey, neutral or not neutral! We need the copper, that is enough."

"But I need it too!" argued the lady. "What am I to do without my pots and kettles? It's an outrage to treat Greeks as you do your enemies!"

"Greeks!" roared the soldier; "what have the Greeks done for us? If they are not fighting us to-day, they will be to-morrow!"

"But we are really your allies!" ventured the lady, changing her tactics; "although Greek by birth, my husband is a Turk by adoption."

"Good!" was the reply. "If you are our allies you should yield *everything* without a murmur, and should have done so long ago. Since you have not done this, which it was your duty to do, we shall take everything you possess in copper or

brass—even your ornaments!"

And they did! There were few Belgian houses more thoroughly robbed of the desired metal than was the house of these *pretended* German allies!

The ever-dreaded visits from soldiers were like swords of Damocles hanging over our heads. No one dared leave his house for any length of time, for fear of returning to find it ransacked and looted, and himself perhaps under arrest because a forgotten *Times* or other forbidden literature had been discovered. An innocent conscience did little to allay this fear, as many persons were imprisoned on the slightest excuse. Even when liberated later, they had every detail pried into of their private life, correspondence, and financial circumstances, besides being held in close confinement and intense suspense for two or three weeks, often much longer.

One entire family we know, a family of high standing in Brussels, was arrested upon suspicion, not excepting the delicate mother. She was confined in a cell for seven weeks, pending investigation—which failed to find any proof of guilt on her part or that of the others. Neither they nor anyone knew why they were seized, save that the son was suspected of having received or passed on the *Libre Belgique*. After a trial that led to no definite verdict of guilt the family was liberated, but obliged to pay a fine of twenty thousand marks!

Not only were suspected persons arrested, but their close friends and everyone who innocently happened to call at their homes after, or at the time of their arrest.

In the offices of a business friend of ours, an employé failed to appear one morning, and a young girl typewriter was sent to his house to learn the reason of his absence. As she did not reappear, another employé was sent in quest of her, who also did not return. In the afternoon the typewriter's mother came to inquire why her daughter had not gone home for dinner at midday; and, on being told whither the latter had gone, she hastened to the absent clerk's house, fearing some calamity had befallen the girl. When she too failed to return, our friend's mystification became apprehension. He appealed to the police, who informed him all had been arrested as possible accomplices of the suspected clerk, who was afterwards proven quite innocent, and liberated.

Such circumstances naturally kept everyone in a state of nervous tension.

A rather interesting and significant fact in regard to these raids was the change of demeanour shown by those obliged to do this work during the second copper requisition in the autumn of 1917. These men were late recruits, usually young fellows, dragged from honourable occupations to serve their bitter time in the trenches, and forced to perform this distasteful service during intervals of rest. At the house of an acquaintance of ours two soldiers of this type very politely asked permission to search for copper, entered, looked about in a half-hearted manner; then, after grunting, "*S'gut; hier gibts nichts*," said they were very tired, and asked permission, which was granted, to lie on two sofas in a back

sitting-room and sleep for half an hour!

Our place was raided at this period by two such tired lads, fresh from the trenches and expecting to return to action in a few days.

When they first entered one assumed an autocratic manner, made rather ludicrous by his frail physique and boyish countenance; but, after we exchanged with him a few words in his native tongue, this bearing disappeared. The two looked through the house indifferently, and, as all metal such as they sought had been hidden, found nothing. They kindly hinted, however, that some brass beds and gas-heating installations would be taken at a later raid should they be found there!—a hint we acted upon at once. Some few articles of silver remained in the dining-room for daily use;—the rest was secreted, as many families, on one excuse or another, had already been robbed of their silverware. One, a finely-worked fruit-dish, purchased as solid silver and, as we thought, not likely to be seized, because of the workmanship, was subjected to a damaging filing process which revealed it as heavily plated on copper. Although the amount of copper contained was certainly too insignificant to be worth having, the fruit-stand was claimed, and noted on a card to be called for later. However, it was hidden, and one of less artistic value set in its place before that predicted call!

It is only fair to conjecture that many instances of inexcusable brutality to which the Belgians were subjected were caused by a stupid fear, on the soldiers' part, of not strictly obeying orders, rather than by any individual wish to cause pain; although in some cases it was quite the opposite.

During the first year of war a rather amusing incident occurred as proof of this. At that time certain neutral business men were allowed to go to and return from Holland by motor. They were provided with special passes. Two friends of mine, who were associated in business, usually made the trip together. But despite their possession of passes signed and stamped by the German Government, they were held up at the frontier, and subjected to galling examination and insolence by a new batch of officials lately installed. As these unnecessary and lengthy delays greatly impeded my friend's affairs, he complained at headquarters. But the Prussian chiefs could not be persuaded that he was not exaggerating the difficulties, and, after assuring him his passes would serve him better in future, put the matter out of mind.

Nevertheless, on his next trip my friend and his companion experienced the same detention and bullying at the hands of these frontier officials.

The former again complained; and, as his word was still doubted, asked that an officer in civil dress might accompany him on his next trip and witness for himself what took place.

This being granted, he, with his associate, and a young Prussian officer, disguised in plain clothes, drove together to the frontier. On arriving there they were—as usual—held up, ordered to leave the car, and enter a bare waiting-room. Here

their papers were taken from them, and, while the officials in charge disappeared on pretence of examining these, they were left sitting in the cold compartment, guarded by two armed soldiers.

One quarter of an hour passed in silence; their accompanying officer made no comment. But when more than twenty minutes went by without the least sign of deliverance, he became restive, glanced at his watch several times, and looked black. Moments had stretched to close upon an hour when the disguised military chief, having until now shown the self-control of discipline, brought his clenched hand heavily down on the wooden table by which he sat, and exclaimed loud, "*Aber, das ist unverschämt!* What the devil are those men——"

Before he could finish the sentence, one of the soldiers on guard seized him, bellowing, "What's that? You speak insolently of German officials? Good! We'll soon teach you manners!"

At a sign, the other soldier approached; the two burly creatures grasped their helpless superior before he could utter a word, and dragged him to an outstanding lock-up house, where, thrusting him into a corner, they proceeded with their punishment, two against one, striking him even in the face with their brutal fists, and permitting him no chance to speak.

The officials, attracted by the loud voices and scuffle, reappeared just after the enlightened German had been dragged out.

"*Was ist los?*" demanded one, looking about.

"Your men are about to kill that chap out there," said my friend, who, with his companion, galled as they were by the unfairness of the attack, had refrained from interfering. To have done so would have expressed contempt of military discipline; moreover, they were secretly pleased that the officer should have his eyes morally opened, if physically closed, by blows intended for a civilian guilty only of an impatient exclamation!

"*Ach!*" returned the official, shrugging his shoulders; "if they are beating him he deserves it!—that's our orders. We submit to no resistance here!"

"Very good," returned my friend; "but have you looked at that man's papers? Do you know who he is?"

"Bah! What's that to me?" returned the surly brute, who held the still unexamined passes in his hand. "Our discipline is indifferent to rank; he may be who he may!"

"If you glance at his papers you may think differently;—he is Lieutenant von ——, aide-de-camp to General von ——."

The official stared; his mouth fell open. "Eh?" he articulated in his throat, too astounded to utter a word; then, nervously dropping other papers to the floor, he sought the officer's pass, read the signature, and, followed by his colleague and the others, rushed for the lock-up house. It was then that my friend saw

the helpless lieutenant, pressed into a corner, being brutally pommelled by the two soldiers.

Poor man! he was a sight to behold when he joined them later—nose distorted, one eye swollen and blackening, and several ugly cuts on his face. He said very little when rejoining his companions; but, judging by the meek demeanour of the bully officials, some truths had been told them they were not likely to forget, which made it clear they would pay dearly for carrying their habitual abuse of authority into the wrong camp!

The lieutenant, as they pursued their journey, could not refrain from smiling at the comic side of the affair. He appeared, however, morally shocked, and the few remarks he made suggested this significance: "The German man is a brute at heart!" When in authority, he certainly appears so, especially when endowed with military power—the sacred fetish of his race!

It was under the constant menace of similar treatment that the inhabitants of occupied Belgium existed. Galled by pitiless impositions; denied all freedom of action or word; robbed and deprived even of home privacy; spied upon and never knowing on what false charge one might be arrested, one could do nothing but endure. Rebellion would have been unavailing against armed forces, and only cause additional misery to others.

One of the pathetic sights of the "copper winter" was to see well-dressed women carrying some treasured object in copper or brass, concealed in a neat package, to be buried in some friend's garden. Even sadder was it to view the military depôts for the collection of household necessities or ornaments. Bronze statues (one Belgian, with pleasure, sent a bronze bust of the Kaiser—which was returned to him), gas-fixtures, handles of doors and bureaus, clocks, stair-rods, curtain-bars, etc., were hurled, pell-mell, in a great heap before the grieving eyes of those despoiled, who were paid four francs a kilo for the metal, in whatever beautiful and artistic form. And these things—the sole fortune of many—were to be utilized to slay their husbands, brothers, fathers, and sons! No wonder every effort was made to defy the command, and that some even melted their things rather than yield them!

This the enemy failed to understand. With native lack of sensitiveness for other people's feelings, the Germans argued that, as Germany had made the sacrifice, Belgians should do so as readily! That was always their reply to appeals for consideration. They appeared quite blind to the fallacy of such reasoning, but took pains to announce in their home papers the Belgians were selling their copper in order to buy food!

That autumn became a season of secret interments, for not only copper but certain preserved edibles were buried to escape the vampire's greed, and in anticipation of the famine obviously approaching. What the Alimentation Commission provided was so little for each individual that hunger reigned generally, not only among those who depended wholly on charity. The latter,

indeed, were better off than many British women and others formerly well-to-do; and everyone who could sought to lay by something for a still more trying hour.

These silent midnight burial-parties were not devoid of a comic side, despite their pathetic object. Whole families gathered in the dark of their gardens, busy about a yawning grave, wherein a red-glazed lantern afforded dim light invisible from the surface. No word was spoken by the shadowy forms consigning food and treasure to the earth's faithful keeping. All was done in silent haste, in order that every suspicious trace might be obliterated before dawn. Bushes and even small trees were planted above the graves, and stood innocently smiling in autumn leaf when the sun arose!

Food grew daily scarcer and dearer. With the entrance of the United States into the war it seemed as though Belgium was doomed to famine. The laying up of provisions that could not be buried, even by those who could afford it, was dangerous, since they were forbidden, and could not be concealed from the prying eyes of soldiers likely at any moment to enter our houses. Consequently the winter of '17-'18, with a great scarcity of coal and the probability of being deprived of gas, was looked forward to with dread.

During the summer every patch of ground, even road-edgings, was cultivated. Vacant fields were divided into small patches and given to the poor to till and plant; potatoes especially were grown, for during the preceding winter there had been a great dearth of this mainstay of the poorer classes. Now, however, it was not only the indigent who feared starvation. The well-to-do and even the rich anticipated being deprived not only of the better edibles to which they were accustomed, but even of necessities. Consequently flower-beds and lawns of private estates were tilled to raise potatoes, beans, sprouts, etc. Our own croquet-ground was converted into a potato-patch; the rose-garden produced cabbages, onions, and beets, while the tennis-court netting served to support climbing beans! But ill-fortune made that summer, in regard to weather, the worst Belgium could remember for many years, as the winter before had been one of the most severe. Continual rain destroyed a large proportion of the potatoes and greatly injured other crops.

It was pitiable to see farmers who, deprived of their horses,—for the Germans had taken all,—had tilled their fields, foot by foot, with spades (the more fortunate with slow and stubborn oxen), and had laboured from dawn till dark to make them flourish, gazing in wide-eyed despair upon acres of rain-blackened rye or blight-ruined potatoes. As the Germans claimed a large percentage of all produce, this misfortune raised the price of ordinary vegetables, poor as they were, so high that only the rich could afford them. The poor were obliged to subsist on the two potatoes a day per head which—until their stock was exhausted—the "National Alimentation Committee" [1] provided.

[1] "Le Comité National," Belgian organization for distributing food-stuffs provided by the American Commission for relief.

Not far from us, on a narrow strip of grass-land bordering a wood, two poor

women "whose husbands were fighting" had planted vegetables for their own use during the winter. They were mothers of several small children, but despite this care and their household duties, they were at work there at the first glimmer of day. They went home only at midday to procure the charity soup and warm it for their children, then returned to labour until dark. It seemed impossible that anything could thrive in such a shadowed place, but a weak crop of potatoes, cabbages, and beans presently appeared, only to be partly destroyed by rain, while much of what survived was stolen later by those who had no land to cultivate.

However, after the roots had begun to form and until the potatoes were ripe, these women never left the spot unguarded. One or the other remained there the entire day and night, rain or shine, as did all who had unprotected ground. They erected a primitive sort of shelter, composed of every conceivable thing they could find: bits of rusty tin and old carpets, for the most part, as wood was too dear and too much needed for fuel. Ah, they suffered, these people!—suffered as no one can understand who did not see their daily struggle to live. Young and old women went tramping for hours and *days* through the woods to gather dry twigs and bear them home in great bundles on their backs;—not only the usual poor wretch, whose patient drudgery so well serves the landscape-painter, but many women who were formerly in comfortable circumstances, now blue with cold and pinched with hunger, trudged through the rain-oozing dead leaves of the woods.

Later, they went entirely without shoes, for all leather was taken by the Germans; and until wooden sabots could be produced in sufficient numbers to meet the demand, women and children were to be seen with their feet shod only by bits of carpet and often without stockings. Their patience under these miserable conditions was extraordinary. When told they could have no coal, they made no murmur, but set out to gather twigs as though realizing the uselessness of rebellion, and only impelled by an instinctive impulse of self-preservation.

Many hundreds of trees were felled each winter for exportation and other German uses, and the poor swarmed where this was done, waiting eagerly until each superb tree crashed to earth, when they swooped down upon it, like hungry vultures, each securing what he could of the lesser branches, to ensure him some warmth during the cold months.

These hapless creatures, terrified by the approach of another season of bitter winds, ice, and snow, gradually became desperate, and were ready to commit any crime to obtain food and fuel. Stealing became more and more common, especially from landed peasants who, owing to the high prices they demanded for their produce, were looked upon as legitimate prey. To some extent this was deserved; but the peasant, after working his very life into the soil, was obliged to resign so much of his crops to the Germans that he would have gained nothing had he sold at normal prices. Potatoes, even in September of this year (1917), were selling at three francs fifty and four francs a kilo, butter at thirty francs rising to forty-eight later, sugar at twelve rising to twenty, coffee at ninety, tea at

one hundred and more, while eggs rapidly mounted from seventy-five centimes to two francs sixty each; flour, outside the 250 grams allowed for bread, was unobtainable. The Comitié National provided certain edibles at a low price, but hardly sufficient for each individual to keep body and soul together.

I was told by one of those who assisted in the difficult and arduous task of dividing the shiploads sent over from the United States and elsewhere, that supplies had to be calculated, most minutely, to the last box of matches, in order that each individual in all parts of ravaged Belgium should have a share. Their labours were of incalculable worth, and are not likely ever to be adequately estimated.

As for coal, which the Germans were shipping from Belgium in great quantities to their own country, or exchanging for other commodities, with Switzerland and other countries, it was only to be had through the *accapareurs*. These went on foot with push-carts to Charleroi, or were conveyed there by any wretched beasts they could find, and bribed the German sentinels to let them return with small amounts of coal, for which they demanded two hundred and fifty francs and more a ton. Even at this price it was under weight, and mingled with dust and stones. The use of gas was consequently greatly restricted. In September an *Avis* announced an increase in its price and a still more trying limitation, the exceeding of which would be punished by entire deprivation, not to mention a heavy fine. Buildings occupied by Germans, however, were stated to be exempt from these restrictions.

The occupying powers seized everything they wanted. The entire contents of dry-goods and other ware-shops were requisitioned; food-stores, when not deliberately stolen, were bought up in bulk by the officers, and sent home to their families in Germany. Even the shooting of the game with which the woodlands about Brussels were well stocked was forbidden to all save the army. The Bois and adjacent woods resounded, during the shooting season, with the report of German hunting-pieces destroying partridge and pheasant preserves, and that even on private property; but a young Belgian lad, caught poaching not far from the place where we lived, was shot in the act and left where he fell.

These men with guns cared little for the sufferings of the unarmed and famished people under their control, and found it easier to punish petty opposition to their laws of greed by a bullet than by trial or imprisonment. Their victims were numerous. One boy, whose family I knew, was shot and badly wounded for trying to smuggle from the country two kilos of potatoes, not for sale, but for the needs of his family.

Naturally, such conditions led in time to dishonesty. The people became desperate, and, finding they could secure food by risking their lives, presently developed the idea of gaining fortune by the same means. Reckless of an existence so rife with misery, they became more daring; and then it was that the *accapareurs* appeared, by whose courage and clever trickery the rich, at least, were provided with edibles that would otherwise have gone to Germany. These petty smugglers

(not the great ones, who cornered large quantities of food-stuffs and concealed them against the hour of dearth) were, in a way, a God-send to those who could afford to pay their prices; but their morals suffered further degeneration when greater numbers adopted this scheme for rapid money-making. Their gains, however, were not easily won, as they were obliged to walk many miles during the night in all sorts of weather, to escape the German sentinels who guarded the city limits and took all butter, eggs, potatoes, etc., discovered on the smugglers. The latter concealed their wares most ingeniously, often in a manner not appetizing to reflect upon. Butter was packed about their bodies under their clothing, eggs were securely secreted in their hats, and potatoes were carried in sacks under the women's skirts and also in their blouses. For the smuggling of grain a complete suit was worn, so arranged with pockets, that the grain was distributed over the entire body. But the cleverest device was that of a man who bribed a German soldier to sit with him on his donkey-cart and, pretending he was under arrest, brought in a thousand francs' worth of butter and eggs on one journey!

During that winter, when the enemy, menaced by defeat in the west, was planning a new and desperate offensive, unhappy Belgium saw her oppressed and hungry people degenerating into criminals. The better sort remained loyal to their proud standard of honour before all, but the destitute lower classes, physically enervated and morally sickened, came gradually to look with contempt upon principles so cynically ignored by those who governed them.

They saw rich and poor alike robbed with no adequate excuse, saw the country's wealth carried to Germany merely to enrich their enemies.

Even stud-farms were despoiled of those horses that had been the nation's pride, such as the *cheval de trait*, bred with care, through many, many generations, to attain a point of perfection unequalled in any other part of the world. Those superb Belgian horses were taken, not for army use, but to be sold in Germany—as was announced later on in a German paper. And not only the young animals, but champion stallions and mares, especially those which were pregnant, were seized in opposition to the appeals of their owners. To these appeals and to the argument that it was understood that the occupying army should take nothing not essential, von Bissing replied that, circumstances being changed, the German Government was no longer bound to respect its agreements: ("Les circonstances s'étant modifiées le gouvernement allemand n'était plus en mesure de respecter ses engagements"). The "circumstances" amounted to this—that Germany had the country helplessly in her grip, and, foreseeing final victory, could fearlessly throw more "scraps of paper" into the face of her hapless victim!

A German bank commissary, an officer, entered the business house of a prominent Brussels firm and desired information concerning certain transactions. After an hour or two of investigation, he withdrew, saying he would return presently to complete his work. Inadvertently he left his portfolio behind, and the temptation to look into it was not resisted by those who thus had a chance to learn something of Germany's secret devices regarding Belgium. On examining its contents,

they found a list of all the foremost business associations in Brussels, with exact details as to their management, financial standing, and relations with the outside world; also the director of each was mentioned by name and estimated in regard to his influence and worth.

The important foreign interests of the firm in question were set forth, accompanied by a statement that it would be greatly to Germany's advantage to obtain control of the organization.

This was told me by one of the firm's head managers, who added: "It goes without saying we made good use of this chance enlightenment in order to foil German designs."

These intrusions into business houses were of daily occurrence, but, in some cases, clever foresight rendered them of little avail to the subtle intriguers.

In one instance, that of the Public Utilities Company, "La Financière," sixty-five million francs' worth of Allied securities (the major part of which were owned by British subjects) were saved by the general manager's sagacity. At the beginning of 1915, two German officers, accompanied by twelve armed men, entered "La Financière" building in quest of these securities, which they had been informed, through some unknown source, were preserved there. The soldiers were posted in all corridors to prevent any attempt to escape the seizure by employés passing from one office room to another—a trick resorted to by others on more than one occasion of perquisition! The general manager, Mr. D. Heineman, an American, was then called, and bidden by the officers to submit his books and vaults for examination. This he did without the least hesitancy, having already—in anticipation of such a visit—altered his books and removed the securities to a vault, in the same building, sufficiently camouflaged to defy detection.

When the officers failed to find any trace of the desired deposits they expressed surprise, and affirmed they had learned, on good authority, such securities were held by the house. Mr. Heineman replied the information was quite correct, but, as could be seen by his books, the securities had been removed from Belgium at a certain prior date.

Meanwhile dishonesty increased in the lower ranks. Even those employed in the food organization filched sugar, rice, flour, etc., which they sold secretly at enormous prices. Certain personal experiences may illustrate the crafty ingenuity which prolonged sorrow and deprivation gradually developed among the common people—occasionally, too, among those of the better class, obliged for the first time in their lives to suffer the degrading pangs of want.

Fruit, although there was plenty in the country, was shipped away in such quantities that the inhabitants could only indulge in it as an expensive luxury. One day, when I discovered a pushcart piled high with nice-looking apples, at a price far lower than that demanded at the market, I ordered five kilos to be taken home and paid for on delivery. The youth who, with his mother, tended the cart agreed to deliver them if his tram fare were paid in advance. As he

had some distance to go, this was willingly done, and a written line given him for our butler, bidding him pay for the fruit at the stated price. I then went on to visit a friend, who, on learning of the apples, immediately wanted some and we set forth to revisit the cart.

We had, however, gone only a few yards, when I was astonished to see the pushcart, attended by both the youth and his mother, standing before a house a few doors below that of my friend, where they were selling fruit.

"What does this mean?" I asked the youth. "You have not taken the apples to my house!"

The young rascal, who had counted on never seeing me again, hung his head, and murmured with seeming penitence, "Ah, I beg your pardon, but it was so far to go, and I could not leave my poor mother to push the cart alone."

Although the best of the apples were now sold—for all save those on top were miserable things—we each ordered five kilos of the fruit to be delivered at my friend's house. To obviate any more trickery we remained by the cart while this was done, and only paid after seeing the apples taken in by a servant; then went on to enjoy an unusually lovely afternoon in the Bois, sure of having made a good enough bargain, even though the fruit secured was only fit for cooking.

But my friend, on returning home an hour or so later, discovered we had been worsted after all!

After waiting until we were out of sight, the fruit-sellers went back to the house, and, presenting the pencilled line I had given and failed to reclaim, stated that we had decided to purchase all the remaining apples, at the price mentioned in the note. Consequently, twenty odd kilos of remnant fruit, such as no one else would buy, were landed at my friend's house at a price more than double their worth!

On another occasion, when butter was unprocurable even at thirty francs a kilo, two peasant-women came to our house with butter smuggled in from the country, which they offered at twenty francs a kilo. Eager as we were for it, but made cautious by experience, we insisted upon tasting before buying. The women readily opened one package, and, on finding it excellent, we agreed to take all they had—five kilos; but, to prevent possible deception, we sampled each package, all of which were equally good. We therefore joyously paid the price, and, after contracting for more butter, and a quantity of eggs to be delivered the following week, dismissed the women with our blessings and sincere gratitude.

But, alackaday! when those glorious loaves of yellow butter were being prepared an hour later for preservation, they were discovered to be merely masses of filthy fat surrounding a large *betterave*, which made up the weight, the whole cleverly covered with a thin layer of good butter. Needless to say, the women never returned, and as it was strictly forbidden to buy peddled butter, we could do nothing but grin and bear it.

These fraudulent geniuses were products of the war, and no one who witnessed the pain they bravely endured, for three years and more, can justly condemn them.

And it was not only the poor who were driven to desperation by the enemy's robbery. Everyone, save the very rich, or the *Barons Zeep*—the so-called soap-barons who made fortunes in secret relation with the Germans—was reduced to hard straits. Clothing became impossible to procure. Fashionable women were obliged to dye their linen sheets for summer wear, their blankets and curtains for winter; while club-men, in shiny trousers and frayed cuffs, were wont to exchange laughing comparisons as to the condition of their other wearing apparel, one likening his oft-patched pyjamas to Jacob's coat of many colours!

A pathetic instance of this dire need came to my notice one day as I was trying to coax a farmer in the open fields to sell me potatoes—for there was no other means of obtaining this article of food save by buying surreptitiously, smuggling it home under cover of night, and burying it underground.

While I was talking to the farmer, an elderly man slowly passed us—a man evidently of good birth, whose clothes, though worn and shabby, showed the cut of a good tailor. Soon after he had passed, the farmer abruptly checked what he was saying to me and, with sullen eyes directed toward another part of his acres, muttered, "Look at that! They are all thieves, even the aristocrats!"

I looked, and saw the man referred to tugging frantically to uproot a *carrot*!

The farmer uttered a loud and angry cry, which interrupted his efforts. He rose without haste, and moved slowly away, his stick held dejectedly behind him.

X

A

AS may be seen, existence did not improve with time. Each month the situation became darker and more alarming; and, after the United States declared war, the few Americans, we among them, obliged to remain in Brussels were hated by the occupying powers quite as cordially as the English. But we who represented a nation not only mighty in wealth and man-power, but of vast commercial importance to Germany, were treated with far greater consideration than the Belgians. Nevertheless, after the United States Minister, Consul, and entire diplomatic corps departed, we felt more or less at the mercy of that bullying tendency which power always brings out in the Prussian military character.

The United States Consul, Mr. Ethelbert Watts—a man known for his tactful handling of difficult situations and trained in diplomacy by many years of service in the greater capitals—told me an instance of this characteristic.

It was at the beginning of the third year of war. Among the forlorn creatures he took under his protection was a young lad below military age, a Belgian on the paternal side, whose mother, a widow American-born, was then in the States. The lad and his sister had been left in Brussels to await her return, but as she was unable to do so, the two were soon reduced to deplorable straits. The sister found a home through marriage, but no other improvement of circumstances. The boy was taken into the consulate to assure him some means of support, besides what the Consul personally allowed him. But when the Germans began to seize young civilians, and send them to work in the trenches or in Germany, the boy's mother sent heart-broken appeals to have her son, delicate and wholly unfit for such labour, shipped on to join her. Although this appeared hopeless, the Consul, as representative of a country still neutral, did his best to accomplish it. After much labour and long argument he succeeded; the youth received a pass, and was ready to leave on a certain date.

The evening before his departure for Holland, the Consul received a hastily-scrawled note from the lad, stating that he had been arrested, and was then locked up, he knew not why. It was too late to do anything that evening, but the following morning the Consul went to German headquarters to obtain an explanation.

He was received by a stout, red-faced superior officer, who at first refused to answer questions, but finally announced that the boy was suspected of espionage.

"May I ask upon what ground?" the Consul demanded politely.

"Upon several suspicious indications," was the evasive reply; "he must be held for further examination."

"But his passage to America is booked for the day after to-morrow," urged the Consul. "He must leave Brussels to-day if he is to catch the ship."

The other shrugged, saying indifferently, "I regret that is impossible."

"But his pass has been given him, sir, and as I have personally vouched for his integrity, I consider it only fair you should tell me on what 'suspicious indications' you hold him."

After a lengthy and needless discussion, it was asserted that the boy's notebook betrayed he had carried letters, and delivered them to several persons in the city.

At this Mr. Watts looked amazed. "Certainly," he retorted; "he was in my employ for that purpose, and I can prove to you that every letter he conveyed related to legitimate consular business."

After some more wrangling the notebook was produced, and this proven to be true, but the stubborn tyrant showed no sign of yielding. The proof could not be held as satisfactory until investigated. And so forth and so forth, until, after another half-hour of futile talk, the officer suddenly announced that the boy could on no condition be liberated without the payment of a fine.

"It will be a matter of two thousand francs or so," he complacently added, confident of adding this amount to sums extorted daily from the inhabitants on one pretence or another. "Of course, as the boy has no means, payment may be made by anyone who. . . ."

There he was abruptly stopped, for the American's rage, already at boiling-point, could no longer be controlled. Although a less robust and considerably older man, the Consul sprang aggressively to his feet.

"Not one centime shall be paid!" he cried, shaking a defiant finger under the officer's very nose; "and if that boy is not liberated to-day, my Government shall hear of the matter in every detail by cable!"

His face was white, and the flame in his eyes drove some red from the Prussian's face. The latter's tactics immediately changed. "Come, come, sir; no need to lose your temper," he remonstrated, in a voice now devoid of its former dictatorial tone. "Let us talk it over quietly; perhaps we may. . . ."

"No," interrupted the Consul. "I have talked for over an hour, and have said all I have to say. This is my last word on the subject—good morning!"

As it was then luncheon-time, he returned to his residence, scarcely hoping for a satisfactory settlement of the matter, but determined, should it be denied, to carry out his threat.

This proved unnecessary, for, on going to his office an hour or so later, he found the boy there to greet him, and sent him off to Holland that evening.

This incident serves to show the mental attitude of the powers then dominating Belgium, and also explains the consideration, comparatively speaking, shown to Americans. Belgium was at their mercy, and, owing to sufferings inflicted, more or less outwardly submissive, since those who betrayed the least resistance were cast into prison with no hope of being avenged, at any definite period, by their exiled Government. It also demonstrates that worst of all the evil qualities developed by militarism in the German who wore a uniform—the readiness to crush the weak and to respect firm and fearless defiance in the strong. This quality, manifested even in peace-time—among the police, for instance, and other officials in Berlin—is peculiarly galling to foreigners.

In October 1917 another copper raid took place, and our homes were again subjected to armed invasion. We were now ordered to deliver the beds we slept on, if brass, our chandeliers, bathroom fittings, and all ornamentation in brass or copper with which our houses were embellished—to dismount and convey them to the enemy without a murmur. This, after all kitchen-utensils and many other necessaries had already been claimed! And, strangest of all, while this robbery of private houses was going on, many shops in the city remained well stocked with all manner of things, in brass and copper, which, being new and marketable, were left for a later seizure, to be shipped to Germany for sale!

Machinery of all sorts was also taken; the before-mentioned steel manufacturer

of Bruges told me how he was robbed of a vast and very valuable plant, of which some important portions had been purchased in Germany just before the war. Military engineers came to look over the place, noted down the more valuable fittings, and informed him that men would come to dismount them the following day. They arrived as predicted, and their chief was the very man originally sent to set them up by the German firm who had sold our friend the machines! A week or two later another representative of this same firm had the audacity to present himself before the ruined manufacturer and try to negotiate with him for the purchase of new machinery after the war!

It may be the recognized right of an occupying army to demand what it urgently needs and cannot otherwise procure, but in Belgium there was no question of right or need; everything was taken, not only copper and machinery, but silverware, clothing, and articles of artistic worth, which could be of no possible use to the army; and, from Bruges and other places, many priceless paintings, and other treasures of artistic and historical value.

An explanation of this latter feature of the general and systematic looting was given rather dramatically by one of the German soldiers engaged in rifling a house. It was witnessed by a friend of mine. The house adjoined that of my friend, and he, expecting his turn would come next, watched to learn what he must hide while all sorts of metal objects were brought forth and hurled into a van waiting to receive them.

Presently one of the soldiers, acting according to orders, came out bearing a silver tray, on which was an exquisite tea-set of the same metal. He carried it with care toward the van, paused, and examined it pensively. Then, after brief deliberation, he set it down on the pavement, took two of the shining objects, a teapot and cream-jug, and savagely beat them together until no vestige of their fair form remained. After throwing these into the van, he did the same by the others, and finally trod on the tray, destroying it with his heavy, iron-nailed boots. A second soldier, coming laden from the house, paused to watch him in amazement.

"What are you doing that for?" he asked.

The other, taking up the mutilated tray, glanced at him with flaming eyes.

"There's no need for the officers to have these pretty things!" he growled, and tossed it into the van.

Another man, Monsieur de R., told me the following interesting experience:

His country house, stocked with things of beauty and value, accumulated during many years of travel, was occupied and pillaged when the German army, drunk with the temporary success of their first onslaught, were pursuing bandit methods through the country. Everything was taken: pictures and other almost priceless works of art, silver, glass-ware, even linen and clothing. What could not be removed was cut through with swords or otherwise destroyed, and the château, after sheltering troops for some time, left in a deplorable state of wreckage and

filth. The park was damaged by horses, and many of the fine old trees cut down for firewood. Monsieur de R. bore the loss with that amazing stoic endurance manifested throughout by the Belgians. His only remark at the time was: "It is sad; but—*que voulez-vous*? We are at their mercy, and they have neither mercy nor conscience!"

But that all Germans are not devoid of these qualities, he had, a few weeks later rather astounding proof.

One day the card of a lady whom he did not know was presented to him at his Brussels residence, accompanied by a request to speak with him privately upon an urgent matter. As the name was German, he hesitated; but curiosity impelled him to receive the mysterious visitor. She proved to be a young and refined woman, very shy, and evidently greatly agitated.

After returning his cold bow she came to the point at once: "I have come to tell you, Monsieur, that many of the things taken from your château were sent on to me in Germany."

"*Vraiment?*" he replied, with a scarcely perceptible smile of ironic wonderment.

"Yes; they were sent to me by my fiancé, the officer who—obtained them from your house." Her lips trembled as she sought for a less objectionable word than "stole" to express the deed. "I am having them all returned to you—every item. They have not even been unpacked."

"Ah!" The Belgian stared, unable to imagine the object of this astounding statement from one of a race he believed devoid of honour.

But, without a word of encouragement, the noble girl related her story in a brave but unsteady voice, broken, toward the end, by tears that did much to soften his bitter feelings. The objects referred to, carefully packed in cases, had reached her after a letter from her fiancé relating how he had procured them. How he put it, she did not reveal; but her reply was a determined and high-spirited refusal to accept them. She had come to Brussels in order personally to see the victim of this robbery, and obtain his word of honour that he would never divulge her fiancé's name in connection with the affair.

My friend was so greatly impressed and touched by the admirable courage and fineness of her confession, that he readily gave the promise, and I believe no power could force him to break it!

XI

T

THE Belgian race, in general, is possessed of a certain philosophic patience under calamity, engendered, no doubt, by the fact that their country has so often

served as the battlefield of other nations. Though hating their oppressors, they seldom, even in private, uttered any emphatic expression of hatred; and such criticism as was spoken was characterized by admirable, sometimes amazing fairness.

Even at the darkest times I have often heard persons of all classes express generous acknowledgment of the slightest evidence of justice on the part of the Government, and have been impressed, when wrongful acts were related, by their failing to omit the least redeeming detail they considered essential to truth.

By the time the second demand for copper was made, the people were too hopelessly miserable to express resentment even in private. Words had proven too futile, and active revolt would have been folly. But, unreviling as they were, and morally stunned by knowledge of their helplessness, they stored up their wrongs in their memories and aching hearts. At this period, too, the subtle German scheme for exciting the Flemish population against the Walloons, thus causing internal discord, had reached a critical point. The few Flemings who ignorantly allowed themselves to be bought or persuaded to help this plot, and so secure a commercial market in Belgium after the war, occasionally, at the enemy's dictation, made demonstrations usually ending in riots. Thus among the people an enmity was stirred up, likely to prove more serious after the war.

When, after the second glorious check before Paris, the German forces were being driven back for the last time, the official attitude in Brussels became considerably milder. The miserable news-sheets allowed us wailed sycophantic appeals to the world's "humanity" to stem the "deluge of blood" flowing from the flood-gates opened by Germany herself. And yet, at the same time, the controlling Powers left no means untried to excite civil war in Belgium. Side by side with these touching and flowery appeals to an outraged world, were long columns pointing out how the Flemish population had been wronged for generations; calling them to stand up for their rights; subtly suggesting how, with Germany at their back, they could be masters of the country! The brother of my dentist, a Fleming, was approached, and asked to head a certain association aiming at Flemish dominance. He was promised not only all the coal, potatoes, and other necessities he needed, but also that a hundred thousand francs would be deposited to his credit in a Dutch bank. To his honour, it may be added, he refused the offer with scorn, as did all those of intelligence whom the enemy tried to seduce.

With such shameful wrongs eating into their souls, these people were expected again to dismantle their homes, and help Germany to hold territory won by craft, while seeking an advantageous peace. No step back would the invaders take to spare millions of poor citizens driven daily from hearth and home. On the contrary, they hunted them forth like cattle, at the evacuation of each town, in order to loot their houses and shops. The sister of our cook and her husband were driven from Menin without being allowed time to safeguard their possessions. Scarcely had they issued from their abode, where, after years of effort, they had established a small business in clocks and jewellery, when a German van

appeared at their door, and, in their very sight, carried away over five thousand francs-worth of hard-earned stock. The couple, with hundreds of others, were herded into a cattle-car so closely that they were obliged to stand, pressed one against another. They were carried on to a town near Ghent, and thence made to walk for four hours, in the night, and without food; crowded into another cattle-car, and distributed, destitute, over the country to subsist, as best they could, on the charity of others.

One Belgian told me the following story without a quiver of voice or other show of feeling, save that the pain of it drove the colour from his face. He possessed a château at Aerschot and, having married during the war, was allowed to return to it with his bride during the second summer. He found the place greatly altered, for it had been occupied by German troops, and much damage had been done, especially in the park, where trees planted by his grandfathers had been ruthlessly felled. But sadder than all, he said, was the fact that many familiar faces had disappeared from the adjacent village. On making inquiries, he learned that all those missing had been shot as innocent examples in order to impress others with terror of German "frightfulness." Though told this by the remaining villagers he could hardly believe it; for among the absent were old men, a priest, and one young boy whose mother had since died of a broken heart.

But during the heat of summer he had a ghastly proof that the accounts were true. At a certain point near his park he noticed an appalling odour. After tracing it to a low mound, he had the place opened, and there discovered sixty of the absent villagers, shot, and buried in a heap, scarcely more than a foot under ground.

Another man told me as calmly of an incident that occurred near his country-seat, at the home of a farmer he knew. The farmer had a number of Prussian officers and soldiers billeted upon him in 1914 and, being both good-natured and prudent, he treated them well. When the day came for them to depart, the chief officers, three in number, bade him harness the one horse he still possessed, and drive them to Brussels. There they were to remain a day before rejoining their troops, which were to depart on foot that afternoon. The farmer's wife and daughter, after serving the officers with breakfast, took leave of them amiably enough, and received their thanks for courteous treatment.

But on returning alone, at twilight of the same day, the farmer was surprised to see no smoke coming from his chimney, and still more astonished to find the doors wide open and bits of broken crockery strewn about the courtyard. Before taking his horse to the stable, he cried loudly for his wife, and receiving no answer, ran into the house, which he found deserted. Neither wife nor daughter were there to welcome him, and the kitchen presented a scene of strange disorder, as though wild beasts had been in battle there. Broken dishes lay on the floor, empty wine bottles and tumblers stood on the table, and one lay under it in the midst of a dark, dry stain of wine. To make a long story short, the farmer rushed in terror to the village and there found his assistant surrounded by a group of terrified townsfolk, discussing the tragedy.

No sooner had the farmer departed, than soldiers entered his house, raided the wine-cellar and, after drinking themselves into beasts, assaulted his wife and daughter. The assistant had attempted to defend them, but being unequal to the task against so many, ran to the village for help. When he returned with others it was too late; they found the farm vacated; wife, daughter, and soldiers gone!

The farmer, half-maddened with fear on hearing this, set out with a number of others to search for his dear ones; but only after nightfall they found a trace of them, in a wood some distance from the farm.

While following with lanterns the foot-marks of soldiers which led them to this spot, the farmer suddenly espied a bit of the gown his daughter had worn, protruding from the ground. The place was opened, and there, just beneath the sod, lay the body of his daughter in the ghastly pose of hurried burial.

Later his wife was discovered, quite demented, roaming far off in the country.

This story is not given as one of the most atrocious of those we heard almost daily; for it is far from that. In this case the criminals were drunken soldiers, not cold-blooded, sober officers, such as the authors of the Aerschot tragedy, those committed at Tamines, and all along the route from Liège to Brussels!

Many of the stories were so unspeakably horrible I should not care to perpetuate them in print. I have, moreover, limited myself to such events as came to me first-hand, and also to avoid those already known. These two are recounted merely to demonstrate the lack of human understanding evinced by the German authorities, who expected a people so treated submissively to yield up their possessions, even their very beds and mattresses, to an enemy that had scorned all principles of right and shown them no slightest hint of mercy.

It was little to be wondered at that they hid or destroyed their goods rather than yield them, even though obliged to endure severe punishment when discovered. And no less comprehensible was their contempt for the peace-whines,—the subtle endeavours of a defeated bully to avert the punishment every heart in Belgium was eager should overtake them.

The stupidity of Prussian rule in Belgium was only equalled by this childish effort to escape the consequences of their stupendous crime!—an effort scorned, not only by the Belgians, but by every neutral who had seen with what appalling contempt for all laws of humanity, justice, and civilization they had misused their power, when victory had seemed likely to be theirs.

Long before the too-patient United States raised an avenging hand, several of her children were arrested in Brussels for bitter utterances they could not control. I remember how a young fellow who, having diplomatic connections, had long suppressed his ire, let out one day when he and some friends were lunching together in a café. It was at the time when Belgian civilians were being taken by force to work for the enemy, and one of the party had related a heart-breaking

scene witnessed at one of the railroad stations. Mothers, wives, and sisters were gathered there, weeping and shrieking against the unpardonable cruelty.

This pitiable tale, and others quite as distressing, had roused them all; but the young fellow referred to was beside himself, and when others endeavoured to quiet him, he sprang up and rushed into the street. One or two followed, fearing what he might do, and saw him deliberately cross to the centre of a public square, where, standing bare-headed, he shouted at the top of his voice: "To hell with the Kaiser! To hell with the Kaiser!"

Had he not been dragged back to the café by his companions, he probably would have continued his perilous insult until brought into the desired contact with some German. But such brief satisfaction would have caused not only distress to his entire family, but probably more wide-spreading difficulties. Another American was arrested and dragged to the Kommandantur for having been rude to a soldier in the street, and several were in the German black-book for betraying inimical feelings more or less openly.

Some time later, when the Teuton spirit was considerably broken, a young American accidentally trod on a soldier's foot while boarding a tram and, being insulted, answered back, to be at once arrested by a spy who stood near. When brought to trial, guarded by armed men, before three officers with revolvers in their belts, he was ordered to stand straight, to take his hands from his pockets and show the respect that German officers demanded. He was, in fact, goaded and bullied in order to force him to a show of temper for which a larger fine could be imposed upon him!

The country's distress was greatly augmented when hundreds of homes, already darkened by bereavement and want, echoed the wailing of women robbed of those dear to them under particularly painful circumstances. For every man, young or old, of those taken to Germany solemnly swore, before departing, that he would die of starvation rather than do a stroke of work for the hated enemy. All refused, also, to sign statements (into which the Germans endeavoured to trick them) declaring they left their country willingly!

But they were dragged off, crowded into cattle cars, side-tracked, and left to wait without warmth or food until the military authorities saw fit to let their train pass on. What those men suffered has been recounted by those who investigated these cruelties. I can only judge by the few instances I saw myself. The unspeakable horror of these will never leave me. Several lads came back to die, with hands and feet frozen, too far gone even to take hot milk with which one sought to coax them back to life. The butcher's boy, also, who delivered our meat, returned maimed for life owing to the freezing of his feet.

These, like most others, had refused to help their country's destroyers, and were consequently starved and subjected to all manner of ill-treatment. When reduced to the last atom of vitality they were shipped back like beasts—with less care, indeed, than beasts—locked into bitterly cold cars where the conditions became vile, since they were not allowed to leave them for a moment during the

long, slow, oft-impeded journey. Many, it is stated, died on the way back, and a number of those who survived, after careful feeding with spoonfuls of hot milk, were cripples for life.

Much later, when life here became intolerable for these poor wretches and hope of deliverance had died in them, I believe that some of the weaker ones did go willingly to do *harvest* work in Germany. At the time referred to, however, all intended to work for the army refused as one man, and were taken by brute force.

But the German people were told that these men were carried off because they were starving at home! One of the most outrageous deeds in a whole list of evils was represented as an act of charity!

It is this trickery, this systematic lying, which, from the war's very beginning, has stained the Prussian standard and will always stain it in the eyes of posterity. Their war has been one, unfortunately, in which the shameful deeds of their leaders must always overshadow the courage of their troops. Acts of severity, even crimes, when committed for a vital and otherwise unattainable object, if daringly and humanely done, command a certain amount of respect. But the Prussian tactics were neither daring, merciful, nor wise. Always some excuse, stupid and transparent, was offered, and never, under any circumstances, was tact exercised. Had those unhappy Belgians been well treated on their out-going journey (some even said the soldiers spat in their coffee, the only nourishment they received, after twelve hours locked up in the cars!), had they been cared for even as cattle *must* be, how much more likely would they have yielded to the demands of their persecutors!

Deceit, clumsiness, and obvious delight in giving pain were the principal elements of the German occupation; self-evident trickery like the trumped-up delegation of Flemings sent to Berlin; the hurling of shrapnel into the city of Brussels, and attributing it to the Allies! As the Germans photographed waving handkerchiefs at windows in Brussels when some Prussian of consequence visited the city, in order to impress Germany with the pro-German sentiment of a Belgia in love with her ravagers!

I have often wondered, had England been the invader and tactful Britons—such as those who won the confidence even of the Boers and of all the Indian tribes—had been the masters of Belgium, what would have been their influence, in the end, upon a people weary of suffering, whose original faith in ultimate triumph was being extinguished month by month. Many might have been won by kindness even from the hand that had smitten them; indeed, had the enemy thereafter shown them even ordinary consideration, it is rather terrible to think what the consequence might have been during a period of subjection far longer than the least sanguine could have anticipated.

In November 1917 news of the Italian disaster, grossly exaggerated, was published in three languages on all the city walls, with galling comments and childish boasts. Attention was called to the fact that the Central Powers had won from Italy,

in three days, all that she had acquired in two years, and so forth. No chance was lost to dishearten the Belgian people, though, considering their absolutely helpless condition, the object of this is hard to imagine. It can only be understood as the same shortsighted and unnecessary bullying which a British soldier later told me he had endured for seven months when a prisoner in Germany. This poor fellow, a New Zealander, who had volunteered "for Belgium's sake"—one of the many half-starved and filthy heroes who swarmed to Brussels when freed of their chains—recounted horrors of his prison existence almost beyond belief. Besides being obliged to work for the military advantage of their enemies, they were crowded together in such numbers that to sit down in their place of confinement was impossible; and when sleeping at night, they were obliged to lie one on top of the other. The heat and vermin were so intolerable, that a large percentage of them died, and all were forced to discard their clothing, in order to fight lice that swarmed over them "like a grey covering of dust"! But into those ghastly details I have no heart to go. I only refer to this one of innumerable stories, because of a feature that illustrates the ignoble and needless bullying practised by the Prussian officials. This man stated that their presiding officer not only obliged them to salute him with the utmost humility, but made them wait upon him as slaves. He would deliberately drop his pencil to the ground several times, and order a British soldier to return it each time with a subservient obeisance!

In the midst of the discouragement caused by the news from Italy, the new copper raid took place, and an *avis* appeared requisitioning all dogs above forty centimetres in height. This *affiche* appeared soon after a tax of forty francs on every dog had been announced—a tax resisted by the Belgian police, who refused to supply the authorities with information as to dog owners. It was said, and the bicycle affair gave weight to the supposition, that the demand for dogs was merely a preliminary to exacting the tax. At any rate, the requisition was either vengeance for opposition, or a means of learning who had dogs; for the matter eventually died out, after causing a panic of grief and the painless slaughtering of many pets, in order to save them from ill-treatment by the army. I went to a vet. for this purpose, and there saw a man of middle age openly weeping, and with him his one remaining home companion—since his wife was dead, and a son lost in battle—a soft-eyed, beautiful Groenendael. Even in the streets women were sobbing, and what occurred in the houses where dogs were cherished, I can only imagine by the distress reigning in ours.

Some time later, another *affiche* announced that only dogs under four years old would be taken—a correction which came too late, for many hundreds of persons had already sacrificed their animals. But dogs too old for training would only have been an encumbrance to the army; so, after many worthless dogs had been given up, for a small payment, by those who stole or secured them in other ways, this amendment, which would have spared many a heartache, was tardily published.

Our dogs we never declared, and kept in hiding until the matter gradually died down; and so saved them, after many weeks of anxiety and fear, although

hundreds were taken day by day. There was some mystery about the whole affair. It can only be explained as another mean scheme for obtaining money, whose failure evoked this method of vengeance, for there was abundance of dogs to be had for army work, without depriving people of their pets.

XII

N

NINETEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTEEN dawned with little suggestion of the brilliant and victorious events it had in store for us. Belgium was at the end of her strength, almost at the end of her courage. Everyone, even the wealthy, was cold for lack of fuel in the midst of an unusually severe winter; many were starving, and no one had *enough* to eat. There was, also, scarcely any gas to relieve the darkness of early dusk; in some quarters of Brussels no gas at all, and no candles to be had. The weather was abnormally bitter, and winter dragged on relentlessly into the month of March—the Black Month, when even the bravest hearts were ready to break under the harrowing news of that second German offensive, rushing forward again over all the hard-gained territory across which we had with such eagerness and confidence followed the Allies on the map!

Nothing can depict the moral anguish of those days in Brussels, when the German *affiches* were announcing victory after victory—when an increase of force, gathered from the Russian front, made their success appear inevitable. Trainloads of cannon, ammunition, and men rolled by during whole days and nights, troops reinforced by the desperate determination to win, by foul means or fair, which obsessed the Kaiser and his chiefs. It was a time of utter despair for the Belgians—for everyone, indeed, whose sympathies were with the Allies. And, to add to the pervading misery, every German victory was not only blazoned on the walls, but troops were marched through the city playing joyous and triumphant music from early morning until evening!

When, at last, the news reached us that their onrush was stemmed for the second time, the occupying powers concealed it from us as far as possible. We had looked for great things from America, but were told that their men could not get over, while our souls were sickened by eulogistic accounts of all that the under-sea boats were doing. Each edition of our miserable papers presented a long list of ships sent to the bottom by treacherous Germany.

But the Zeppelin was dead! That was some comfort; and, with a feeling that it was perhaps the sign of better times, we saw demolished the enormous iron-clad garage where one of these monsters used to be housed.

But few gleams of real promise reached us, and it was dread of a fifth winter, then appearing inevitable, that broke the spirit of those who went (only then) to work in Germany as a desperate act of self-preservation.

Even in days that were so much brighter for outsiders, in August and September, we were denied the satisfaction of knowing that our cause was progressing. The information allowed us did little to ease the pressure of mingled hope and anxiety. We longed to learn something definitely encouraging of what was going on where the cannon, ever louder, was continuously roaring. Day by day our papers were searched for some hopeful news, through long columns concocted only to destroy hope and breed despair. Every event suggesting menace to the Allied countries, culled from obscure journals in every part of the world (especially from the *National Zeitung* of Bâle), was set forth and embroidered. Often they bore no more reliable heading than "*Le Bruit court*," but their effect on a people now morbidly prone to look on the dark side of things was none the less depressing. Irish troubles; strikes and discontent in India; political confusion in France and Italy; friction between the United States and Japan or Mexico; disastrous failure of the Allied venture in Russia—such items contrasted with the triumphant German communiqués, which, even when acknowledging retreat, depicted it as a victory, or a mere tactical movement to attain a stronger position for a decisive counter offensive.

Only later were we allowed to know when a position of importance was won by the Allies. Our first knowledge that Péronne had been retaken was the naïve announcement in the German report, "Péronne now finds itself immediately in front of our lines"!—as though the town had grown weary of being behind them, and had of its own will altered its position!

On Monday, 30th September, our principal source of news, *La Belgique* (entirely under German control), contained the following: "Between the Ailette and the Aisne there have been no more battles, but the Germans have withdrawn their line to the east of section Allemont-Jany, leaving Pirnon, Chavegnor, and the fort of La Malmaison in the hands of the French." In regard to the retreat at Cambrai it was stated in the same paper, 30th September, that the withdrawal "*plus en arrière*" of German troops was executed at night unperceived by the enemy, who "for a long time the following morning still held the evacuated territory under fire"; and, in reference to the situation between the Ailette and the Aisne, "Without the least intervention of the enemy, we have drawn back our line behind the Canal de l'Oise," etc. "*Ce mouvement, préparé depuis de jours, s'est effectué méthodiquement et sans être entravé par l'ennemi.*" This "official report," in a tone of curt indifference, proceeds to show all British advances as negligible. Then came such an announcement as this: "Conflict between Suippes and the Aisne and also between Argonne and the Meuse; our forces have attained a complete success."

The redemption of Cambrai, St. Quentin, etc., we only discovered after tracing on the map insignificant places appearing in the war-news allowed us as reached or passed by the Allied forces; usually farms or other trifling localities formerly unknown to fame. Delightful as these discoveries were, they could awake no thrill of confident enthusiasm because overshadowed by the contemptuous tone in which each slight advance and the appalling cost to French and English

was presented. Moreover, every Allied success was attributed solely to the clever military strategy of the Germans. Above all was belittled any progress made by the British, whose abridged and doctored communiqués were always presented in weak and childlike terms that made them appear ridiculous. The English never knew, until several days after evacuation, that the Germans had withdrawn from any locality for which they were fighting. It was stated in an official announcement from Berlin, dated 8th September: "*Le détachement du contact avec l'ennemi s'operait presque toujours à l'insu de l'ennemi.*" Another official statement (13th August) was as follows: "The British offensive between the Ancre and the Avre has been checked, after the strong and vain attacks which have cost them such great losses, at the limit of the old battlefield of the Somme. . . . On the other hand, the French have once more placed in line many fresh divisions in order to attempt to pierce, in spite of all, our positions between the Avre and the Oise to which the Germans have retired in so able a manner (*d'une manière si habile*) after having inflicted such heavy losses on their adversaries."

Niggardly as this information was, we were of course able to derive from it a certain amount of encouragement. But this was damped by the boastful German confidence, the constantly reiterated threat of another vast offensive which would bring the war to an end glorious for Germany; the awful descriptions of French towns reduced to heaps of ashes, and the incalculable losses of the Allies.

In September, when matters were much harder than we suspected for the Central Powers, a new voice came from the monster's mouth—or rather a still more pitiful, soft-hearted cry for poor suffering humanity!—from these people who, after two thousand years of civilization that had gained for them so high a place in the world, had revived, without cause, the treachery and barbarity that had made them odious to and distrusted by Cæsar; who committed crimes in 1914-15 and 1916 that will haunt the world's memory for ever! What a mockery must those German pleas for humanity have appeared to the people of Tamines, Aerschot, Louvain, and other districts of Belgium still grieving for those ruthlessly murdered, still morally suffering from the horrors to which they were unjustly subjected!

Heart-rending pictures were given of fair towns destroyed in the valley of the Somme; of their homeless and perishing inhabitants; of beautiful historic edifices wrecked by the "folly of the French bombarding their own cities"—those centres of a hostile Power that had not hesitated to commit any outrage in its vainglorious and frantic rush for Paris! No murmur of regret had escaped the success-intoxicated legions who advanced, with comparative ease, from the ruins of innocent Belgian towns, leaving devastation and despair behind them! No pang of remorse then made them hesitate to slaughter guiltless citizens, and bury them in heaps, sometimes before life was extinct, or to crucify their first British prisoners—a fact I was later assured was true, by an English soldier who had seen the bodies!

But now that the avenging armies, overcoming obstacles such as the Germans

never had to face, were uprooting them from the strongholds prepared during four years, the despotic song of victory through frightfulness suddenly became a whine of compassion, a childish and stupid wail for peace! No outsider could have been more infuriated at this than those in Brussels who had suffered under the despot's hand and witnessed the vileness of his deeds. Again and again long articles appeared in our papers, trying to induce the cold and famished Belgians to add their impotent appeal for a cessation of hostilities, and to impress them with the suddenly developed Christian spirit of Germany! This failing, an attempt was made at terrorization. Photographs of ruined towns in France were exhibited, showing the homeless inhabitants flying for their lives. The papers gave highly coloured accounts of the general destruction, misery, and horror on the scene of each battle, as the price of every step in advance made by the Allies. The same fate was predicted for Belgium, should the unlikely happen, and the invincible German forces find it expedient to retire to one of their many well-prepared strongholds in that country. (The prospect of a German defeat was represented as too improbable to deserve contemplation.) At one time an account appeared describing the inevitable destruction of Brussels, should the Germans ever be driven back on it. In such a case, it was stated officially, Brussels was to be "the bouquet of the whole war." Added to all this, quotations equally disheartening were printed from English papers. One, purporting to be from *The New Statesman*, was given on 2nd October as follows: "The Germans will certainly draw back their front to rectify it. But at a very short distance behind, they possess lines that form a solid base and, if able to hold it, they will not have lost more territory than they occupied at the beginning of 1918. And even supposing Douai and Cambrai should be lost to them, the experience of years must guard us against exaggerated optimism." "Above all," it finishes, "one can reasonably affirm that Hindenburg and Ludendorf have not absolutely renounced the idea of a counter offensive. For the moment, they relinquish territory, but their retreat is methodic, and we should greatly deceive ourselves to imagine it excludes the possibility of their launching a vigorous counter attack, when the Anglo-French assault will have come to an end through exhaustion." With such discouraging signs came the German movement for peace and plea for humanity!

"This war-fury, this rage for destruction, must be nailed to the pillory" was quoted, about the same time, from a German socialistic paper of 1st August 1918. Would it have been quoted four years earlier, when blood and destruction were the means by which Germany thought to crush civilized states and become master of Europe? Now that her war-chariot lay wrecked amid the corpses of her legions, death, slaughter, and devastation suddenly began to appal her, and roused a cry of fear which found no echo in Belgium. When the British announced they were fighting east of Roussoy and had occupied Lempire, the official information from Berlin, dated the 20th September, told us "the British attempted an advance in the sector Epehy-Lempire with a great number of tanks. An enormous number of these were destroyed, the remainder being obliged to retire; and as to the British infantry, they fled in haste toward their positions of departure." Every effort of the Allies was depicted as having failed, "*grâce au*

feu des mitrailleuses et de l'infanterie allemandes." Then, at the tail-end, a brief announcement would appear that the German line had retired, for strategical reasons, without being molested by the enemy.

In addition to these confusing and contradictory reports long editorials appeared sneering at the Allies' futile efforts. The Americans' advance at St. Mihiel was presented as having been attained "without combat," the Germans having drawn back in accordance with long-prepared plans, and so secretly that the enemy was not aware of it and "only pursued us very hesitatingly." When the British made their great rush on Cambrai and broke through the line that Hindenburg considered impregnable, it was attributed to a fog. When they advanced on Hummel it was over ground that had been deliberately evacuated, with such "masterly ability" that the British for *two days* were unaware of the German's retirement!

Despite the irritation such accounts caused in Brussels, enough was unintentionally betrayed to revive our hope. Most childish of all was the continued boasting of what Germany had accomplished in her first onrush, which, considering all the overwhelming advantages she had, should have carried her to rapid victory. With her check at the Marne she was beaten, and that was the moment when the people and troops of Germany should have waked to their blunder, and rid their great nation of a malady that has ruined its prosperity and degraded its name.

XIII

A

AS the chances of war continued adverse to the Kaiser's "victorious armies" the occupying government began to show more lenient tendencies. In high quarters a gradual and very subtle softening was dimly perceptible. Belgians guilty of patriotic deeds that formerly would have brought upon them the severest punishment—deeds far more serious than that for which Miss Cavell was shot—were now treated with astonishing tolerance. Penalties even for flagrant acts of espionage and defiance of military regulations were palliated through the mysterious offices of a woman whose power no one understood. French by birth, but the widow of a German officer fallen in battle, this individual—a sweet-looking, *petite* woman of about thirty, neither remarkable for beauty, force of character, nor personal magnetism, succeeded in having many death-penalties revoked, in liberating a number of civil prisoners and bending the governmental will, so long implacable, as she chose.

I made her acquaintance in the little faubourg house where she dwelt with her mother and brother, the latter an artist, both of the same pleasant, rather provincial and unimposing type as herself. Her manners and speech, soft and

kindly; her soft, blue, rather childlike eyes suggested no latent power. One instance of her mediation, told me by herself, was that of a man and his daughter condemned to death for espionage. Damning evidence of guilt had been discovered in their possession—drawings and writings containing important information, some of which, it was ascertained, they had smuggled into Holland for the enemy. And although their death-sentence had already been given, the lady of mystery had it changed to imprisonment and a fine. The punishment in another case (that of a Belgian youth caught red-handed attempting to destroy a train conveying German troops) was also altered to a milder form of penalty.

While all in Brussels appreciated the good this young widow accomplished, they were none the less mystified; many ridiculous and, in some cases, ungenerous explanations all equally inadequate were given. A friend of mine, who was present while she pleaded before the military judges, spoke highly of her persuasive powers and stated she had won her object by appealing to their *humanity*! The case was that of a boy who had been caught trying to cross the frontier—almost the very crime for which Edith Cavell, Philippe Baucq, and others were condemned to death. She begged them to consider the anguish of the boy's mother, to appreciate the noble patriotism of his impulse, to put themselves in his place and ask themselves if, at his age, they would not have done the same, and so forth—arguments that had been uttered in that room a thousand times, enhanced by the tears and agony of frantic mothers and wives, husbands and brothers, of those condemned and never pardoned! Yet this familiar plea, spoken by one lacking the deep, heart-torn passion with which it had so often been vainly uttered, won the boy's reprieve! Why? It is difficult for anyone familiar with the former mercilessness of that military court to believe that her softly spoken appeal was alone responsible. A subtle change was coming over the spirit of German militarism. The worlds they had sought to conquer were fading from view, and anxiety to save something from the wreck was probably the root-incentive of their leniency.

During October 1918 a suppressed, half-incredulous excitement could be felt in the very air of Brussels, although contradictory reports prevented us from knowing anything definite. Now and again rumours of thrilling promise would sweep over the city, but disappointment had been too frequent, hope too often quenched in despair, for the lower classes to put much faith on them.

"*Est-ce vrai?*" was their almost invariable reply to news of encouraging character, and scarcely any enthusiasm was shown even by those of superior station. The dread of a new German rush forward appeared to haunt the minds of all, a dread kept alive by the only journals available and by the confusing accounts, always favourable to the enemy, these contained. Even as late as 2nd October we read that the Germans had broken through the Belgian lines, a report given with the old triumphant bravado. Of the battle between Roulers and Warvicq it was said the Allies had failed in their attack: "*Les Alliés ont attaqué sans succès*." Near Cambrai the Canadians had made a slight advance costing them frightful losses, but were driven back on Tilloy by one division of Würtembergers!

On the same date appeared the following report: "D'importantes forces américaines ont attaqué à l'est de l'Argonne. Les points ou la bataille a été la plus chaude ont été de nouveau Apremont et le bois Montrebeau. Nous avons repoussé sur toute la ligne l'ennemi, qui a subi hier de nouvelles et particulièrement lourdes pertes." Equally discouraging accounts were given of the situation in Italy, Macedonia, and Palestine—accounts as much at variance with the Allied communiqués.

Falsification of facts may have been considered necessary in a critical situation such as the Central Powers were facing. Surely, however, they might have spared the unrelenting efforts to terrify and dishearten the Belgians, who, locked in their prison, could not have influenced the Allies' determination to bring the war to an end necessary for the world's salvation.

Even when, on the 3rd of October, it was known in Brussels that Bulgaria had asked for a separate peace, German comments robbed the event of all encouraging significance. It was announced in our papers that enormous forces had been dispatched to Sofia which would "settle the Bulgarian difficulties at one stroke," and drive the Allies back whence they had come! Consequently there was no general elation over an event of such tremendous significance to the outside world. We knew too little of what had led up to it, and hope had sunk too low to revive.

Although, of course, the ever-approaching thunder of guns told us much, and the *feu de barrage* for weeks roared its awful tale, the only obvious indications we had of the vast changes brewing were the altered sentiment and behaviour of German soldiers. They occasionally uttered astounding opinions in regard to their Government and of sympathy with Belgium. The poor Belgians, so long subjected to German trickery, saw in this merely obedience to plotting chiefs who hoped thus to overcome their hatred. No one cut off as we were from outside news could otherwise understand it; while the journals presented little else than vainglorious accounts of Allied reverses, German submarine victories, and the bombardment of Paris by long-distance cannon!

In regard to the last-mentioned outrage, the feeling in Brussels was no less bitter than it must have been in France, and doubtless throughout the entire world. Our papers presented us daily with triumphant descriptions of the terror and devastation caused to the inhabitants of Paris, even stating that the city was being generally evacuated. The Zeppelin had not taught Germany that her uncivilized methods of war served merely to create large and indomitable armies in the opposing nations, once so little prepared for war and so lacking in enthusiasm!

By the time our beds were demanded, and armed men forced their way even into the poorest homes to rob the cold and hungry Belgians of their last remnant of comfort, the change in the soldiers' sentiments became even more marked. Beds were taken, often from under the owners before they had risen in the morning, but in many cases there was a noticeable indifference shown by those who did

the looting. The men who came to our house only took two mattresses, and made no attempt to search for wool that was hidden. One of them expressed very bitterly his distaste for the duty imposed on him, and said, among other startling remarks: "The whole war is an outrage imposed upon us Germans by our leaders, who must pay for it some day not far distant"! Another, whom I met in a shop, told me that if he had not a wife and little children in Germany he would never return to the Vaterland he had been falsely lured to protect. At mention of the Kaiser, he exclaimed savagely: "*Kaiser!—Ach, der Kaiser!*—Wait until the troops get back to Germany! There will be an accounting then!" and drew his finger significantly across his throat.

It was unspeakably pathetic at this time to see the war-weary, ill-clad, and under-fed German troops returning from the front to Brussels; especially those called back to the trenches, after a rest too brief to revive their strength, or dim their recollection of horrors endured. These poor, heavily laden slaves, many so young, with a look of yearning for home in their wide, helpless eyes, called for sympathy despite the wrong they represented. No voice acclaimed them, as they strode through a hating city to give up their lives for a monstrous error; but many of those who watched forgot, for a moment, past suffering to express a word of compassion unheard, alas, by those columns of desperate human beings—beings forced back to be massacred on foreign land, merely for the vanity of their ruler—merely that the German Kaiser's long-cherished and carefully perfected military toy might avoid the disgrace even then inevitable! It was galling to better-class Belgians to note about this time a certain friendliness developing between the German soldiers and common people. At the markets, where soldiers swarmed, it was no rare sight to see girls hanging to their arms, and even older women talking and joking with them. The reason of this was not indifference to all that Belgium had suffered at German hands, but because to these people the soldiers spoke more openly. By dint of constant association they learned that all Germans were not criminals, that many hundreds of the men had been ignorant of the true situation—men who, awaking too late, were conscious of the injustice done and bitter against the power that had deceived and enslaved them.

This recalls a confession made to me, long before, by a man who had lived in Belgium for twenty years, but, being still a German citizen, was called back to the army at the outbreak of war. When approaching the Belgian frontier he and others hesitated, demanding why they were being led into Belgium, and were told that France had violated the country's neutrality, and the Belgians had called upon Germany to defend her! Only when facing Belgian troops, they realized they had been deceived; and to hesitate then meant being shot by their own men.

Despised as the German race was, and probably will be for many generations to come, nevertheless their long-suffering victims were large-spirited enough to recognize the worthiness of individuals, and not hold them responsible for their nation's crimes. But better qualities were shown only by the later troops brought

from Germany to fill vast gaps in the original army hurled to death *en masse* during the first mad effort. These entered the hideous strife when even their leaders were beginning to tremble before the gigantic storm of vengeance they had roused through the whole civilized world. And even these probably did not know the whole of their nation's guilt. At least, one tries to believe they did not; for to think that so great a number of civilized beings could have continued the conflict if aware, from the very beginning, of their leaders' barbarous devices, would destroy one's faith in the stability of civilization. It seems impossible that thinking and, more or less, educated men could countenance the illegitimate aerial assaults on English and French towns; those cowardly and inexcusable air attacks upon Paris which began in the very first month of the war and continued, without mercy, to the end. The glorious capital of France now presents a mass of wounds in her very centre—in cherished localities sacred to all the world, such as the great cathedral of Notre-Dame, on which a bomb was dropped as early as October 1914, before adequate protection could be prepared! It seems as though no reasoning mind could be cognizant of these wrongs without being impressed with the conviction that right was on the side of those nations whose courage was unbroken by mean and unlawful assaults, viler than history has ever before recorded. England did not waver, and France did not waver; every dastardly blow inflicted by Germany only increased their righteous wrath; and the armies returning from the scene where their defeat was already inevitable were beginning to realize how justifiable was that wrath.

They had seen thousands upon thousands of their fellows brought back mangled from invaded countries the holding of which meant nothing to them; had read the long lists of dead, and began to wonder what it was all for. On several occasions I have heard the soldiers ask that question with a look of puzzled wonder in their eyes, more eloquent than the words, "*Wofür ist eigentlich die ganze Sache*?"

Can their rulers answer it in a manner satisfactory to these men? Can they answer it who, safely removed from the hell into which they drove them, continued to cry: "We must go on! We must fight to our last man rather than lose an inch of what we have gained! Victory shall be ours, for God is with us"? It can only be hoped that the Almighty whom they blasphemed by that diabolic decision, will not hold those responsible who, in blind loyalty, obeyed it with the sacrifice of their young and promising lives.

XIV

O

ON 12th October, President Wilson's reply to the German peace plea was made known to us, and its brief dignity, its firm, just, and benevolent strength, stirred every American heart with pride, and awoke among the Belgians enthusiasm only

kept with difficulty within the limits their rulers ordained. Peace then, for the first time, began to be spoken of as a still vague but now conceivable possibility. The poor were eager for it at almost any price—that is, the uneducated and uncomprehending poor. The thoughtful wanted it that further carnage might be checked; but those whose wounds were too deep for forgetting, whose life-interest had been buried in some innocent grave, cried: "They shall not have peace until they are on their knees!" And to the argument that such satisfaction could only be attained at cost of Belgium's total destruction the unhesitating reply came "*Qu'importe?* France has sacrificed her cities, why should not we? Better see even Brussels razed to the ground, than not achieve to the full that aim for which we have already sacrificed so much!"

Their determination to go on was not that of Germany, impelled by greed and pride; but desire to risk all in order to be rid for ever of an unscrupulous neighbour; to eradicate the smallest trace of that neighbour's control, and see it finally broken. This, more even than a righteous and excusable desire for vengeance, was their reason for wishing to continue a conflict that had so injured them, while Germany's object was merely to avoid punishment and the loss of her gains!

Those without work, without hope or ambition, the poor, famished, soup-kitchen folk, would not believe that the Germans really wanted peace: "There is a trick under it; we shall wait and see!" was all their comment. And it seemed as though theirs was the voice of prophecy when news of Prince Max von Baden's famous and seemingly treacherous letter reached us. How this affected the outer world we had no means of judging, but it caused in Brussels mingled anger and fear.

In those days the feeling was very high and enthusiastic for America. "*Ce sont les Américains qui nous out sauvés!*" was the popular sentiment, although America's deeds at the front were never given in our papers. America, according to the German censorship, was even more negligible than England; only the French armies were allowed a certain amount of credit in regard to the "victorious alteration of our front" which the *puissances centrales* were so often obliged to acknowledge in those later days. People, nevertheless, were not so intoxicated by present events as to forget the first thrilling days, when Belgium alone held back that overwhelming tide, and sowed the seed of the victory now approaching; nor those later ones when France and England so marvellously achieved the real, the all-important defeat of Prussia at the Marne. Nor were those still more terrible days forgotten, following Russia's withdrawal—those weeks of anguish when new hordes of Germans rushed through Brussels toward the front, and wiped out all the Allied advances we had been following so patiently, so eagerly, step by step over the torn and blood-soaked regions of France. That period was more appalling even than that of the first onslaught, more annihilating to hope. Looking back on it, recalling the almost crazing tension of anxiety, the reigning conviction that Germany was rushing on to conquest, the second stand before Paris, that wonderful, all-glorious victory, shines out as more brilliant, more

soul-thrilling, even than the first. And yet of the imperishable, recklessly heroic charge of the American marines before Chateau-Thierry, that outburst of fresh and determined energy, which refired the Allies and helped once and for all to turn the tide of war, we knew nothing until after the Allied troops had entered Brussels. We knew only that the enemy was stronger both in numbers and in his determination to win at any cost, despite the hypocritical peace offer that gave him excuse to cry: "You will not have peace on our terms? Then bear the consequences!" and to make those consequences—already prepared—throw into shadow all the horrors of his first *Massenschlacht*.

No, glorious England, France, and Belgium! no plea of overwhelming numbers, no whine of enforced surrender before the entire world, can rob you of laurels won in the first awful years—that vast, unequalled victory which America's generous hand helped at the critical moment to assure you!

The realization that victory was in sight came upon us in Brussels with the dazing suddenness of a comet in a starless night. The first evidence of Germany's collapse was the sudden and astonishing independence of soldiers toward their superiors. We wondered at this for a day or two; then the truth burst on us with an avalanche of disbanded troops, from the *étape* regions, who, flinging off all control, arrived in groups of twenty, more or less. No red flag could be seen among them, nothing explained their strange advent save their look of desperate weariness. So quietly they came that at first everyone believed they were returning on furlough, bearing with them booty seized on the way from the houses and farms of fugitives. Until the time when their increasing numbers attracted even the puzzled attention of children, there was no relaxation of the iron hand.

Even when the red flag of rebellion was glaring defiance of the Kaiser and his flatterers, the daily papers offered us their usual official lies. William the Second's "invincible armies" were represented as still resisting the world; the Allies had been checked at this point or that; and the Belgians again were called upon to consider the dire consequences to themselves and their country of continuation of the war. And this when the war was virtually ended!

I think, from all evidence, the shock was as great to the occupying Powers as to us. They may have been more prepared than we for disaster, but they certainly seemed taken by surprise when that red flag appeared, waving at the head of their defeated troops.

If the war came like a lightning-stroke, it went, so far as we could judge, like a falling star of incalculable speed. Most of us were too dazed to comprehend the meaning of events.

Suddenly the pompous officer with shining helmet, loaded revolver, and dangling sword, who had reigned supreme in streets, cafés, and trams, disappeared.

Those were stirring, extraordinary, unprecedented days! And yet, by remaining indoors, one might have lived through the first of them without suspecting

anything unusual. The troops entered quietly, too contented, apparently, to be done with past strife to plunge into more. Numbers of them sought concealment in Belgium, rather than go back to the discord they expected at home, openly stating they did not wish to return to Germany. These were not deserters, but men known to have come direct from the front. It was a strange experience, and one of peculiar psychological interest, to watch these battle-worn men, soiled, weary, and haggard, crossing the city all with the same look of internal perplexity, as though just waking from a nightmare whose meaning they were trying to solve. They appeared to have no set purpose,—probably none, but the leaders had,—nor did they evince the slightest humiliation at returning vanquished through conquered lands. On the contrary, their attitude toward the people of Brussels was kindly, almost friendly; they seemed even to expect applause from the throngs that gradually gathered to gaze upon them. Some of those watching would doubtless have given them a cry of farewell, in sheer satisfaction at their departure (if not in compassion for the guiltless among them), but for the hideous memories their uniforms evoked. Despite those memories, a genial or joking word was thrown them occasionally from the crowd, and replied to in the same spirit.

If, even *one* year earlier, some trustworthy reader of the future had predicted such a scene, not one of that gaping crowd would have considered it possible; for, as History has never recounted a conflict so frightful, so it has never seen so astounding a termination of war, such a mingling of tragedy and comedy! In those extraordinary street-scenes humanity was visibly struggling on the one side against the follies of tradition, and on the other against the cruel ache of unforgettable wounds. The German troops, repentent, broken, realizing that they had been fighting for nothing higher than a pride founded on their enslaved souls, seemed to crave recognition of their emancipation—looked for some sign of pardon and good fellowship from the people they had obediently ground to earth.

There were intervals between the passing of troops, but soldiers in small groups constantly wandered about looking for a resting-place. Nearly every house in Brussels was obliged to take some of them in for a day or two—soldiers and such officers as had decided to throw their lot in with the revolutionists. Others, the more aristocratic officers, despisers of the red flag, fled as best they could. Occasionally a high-power automobile tore through the city, bearing three or four of these outraged gods toward the German frontier. But soldiers, with levelled rifles, checked their course, two of whom mounted the cars, and, dragging the shining epaulettes from their superiors' shoulders, threw them to the crowd. This done, they stepped back, quietly replaced their weapons, and allowed the car to go on. The officers offered no resistance; though blanched with rage, they were as helpless before their armed slaves as Belgium had been before the massed cannon and diabolic instruments of destruction.

During the first week after the revolution became known, a body of higher officers, with some loyal soldiers, took possession of the Gare du Nord, hoping to prevent

the revolutionists making use of the railway. Had they had a greater number on their side, this act might have caused Belgium, besides all her other trials, to bear the brunt of Germany's internal strife. As it was, many Belgians suffered loss of life and destruction of property through this selfishly stupid attempt to defy the avenging hand. Great throngs of people were in the streets; and I, with a friend, happened also to be in that crowded quarter where the outrage took place. Unwarned and unsuspecting, we were attracted thither by an interesting mass of troops, just returned from the front, with cannon, mitrailleuse, field-kitchens, and armoured war-cars. In the joy of freedom from stern military authority, we all swarmed as close as possible to these, now apparently harmless, features of war.

At a certain point on the main boulevard quite close to the station, one or two armed soldiers stood ineffectually warning back the throngs, without explanation, either too indifferent or too ignorant themselves to enforce their orders. Consequently many curious Belgians drifted past them, some returning the sentinels' challenge with laughing bravado. One guard menaced with his rifle a couple who attempted to pass, but in so melodramatic a manner that, while those threatened fled in terror, many others slipped by him unperceived.

Then the report of a revolver rang out, immediately followed by others, and at the same moment a terrific volley of mitrailleuse was brutally discharged into the street, from windows of the station building—it was said by officers, who cared little how many civilians might be sacrificed to their folly. The amazed and terrified Belgians were driven back like dust before a hurricane—dazed by the deafening roar, by the plunging of frantic horses, the crash of windows on every side, and the whistle of deadly missiles that filled the air like a sudden storm of hail, riddling adjacent houses and felling many a startled Belgian, with the soldiers it recklessly aimed to destroy. In less than two moments after the mitrailleuse opened fire, the street was cleared as by magic of every living being, save the troops firing back. Rushing blindly from a menace so little expected, the people crowded into shops or fled up side-streets for protection. Meanwhile the roar continued until the officers, surprised by troops (who, I believe, entered the building unperceived from the rear), were obliged to capitulate, and the irrational conflict was brought to an end.

Local skirmishes of more or less serious character occurred at intervals throughout the city, during the passage of troops returning to their chastened Vaterland. In certain districts bullet-pierced windows and damaged façades bear witness of these outbreaks, mostly caused during an attack upon officers loyal to the Empire, discovered in their place of concealment. But, considering the unparalleled difficulty of the situation,—these vast armies of enemy troops, flushed with freedom from autocratic control, coming into the midst of a people taught to despise them,—there was extraordinarily little discord. The troops, for the most part, were amiable, taking even occasional gibes in a good spirit. Only the officers—those who still remained, mostly without epaulettes and wearing a bit of red—appeared to distrust the Belgians, and were ever on the alert for attack:

the fear of guilty consciences, apparently quite lacking in the soldier! I myself saw some who (doubtless in accordance with von Hindenburg's suggestion) stayed to settle up matters pertaining to the government, etc., carrying hand-grenades as they moved about the streets—weapons they could hurl into the midst of that massed attack they seemed to dread!

While standing, one day, at the Porte de Namur watching a battered regiment pass by on its slow, foot-weary way to Liège and Germany, I was amazed to hear what an amount of good-natured taunting they received from the crowd, not only without resentment, but often with responsive levity. One man near me cried out in Flemish: "They are bound to get to Paris, but have decided the shorter and best route is by way of Berlin!"

"*Ja, ja!*" returned laughingly a haggard-faced youth seated on a cannon-wagon, "*Sie haben recht!* the road to Berlin is the best of all roads!"

Another man in the crowd took a toy cannon from his pocket, and pointing it at a passing line of soldiers, cried: "Attention! The British are coming!" And to the amazement, I think, of most persons present, he was answered by the troops with a roar of spontaneous laughter.

Some scenes presented by the retreat of Germany's disillusioned and crest-fallen army were pitiful enough to bring tears to the eyes of their bitterest enemies. Often small detachments passed through, not in line, but trudging along as best they could under heavy burdens—probably the sorry remnants of once-proud regiments. These had no commander and evidently no interest save the one fixed purpose to get back to their homes. They carried their belongings either on their backs, or in heavy carts which they dragged along, four or five together straining at the ropes. These cumbrous country carts, probably bought or stolen from peasants, were piled high with bulging knapsacks, boxes, French and English helmets, and other trophies of the battlefield. And, in strange contrast to these, were bits of furniture, coops containing live hens, and often a cow or two tethered behind.

Travel-worn peddlers could not have been more indifferent than these men to public observation. Ill-clad and ill-nourished, they gazed straight ahead, hungering for their wives and children; taking as little interest in the revolution as they did in the Kaiser; trying to forget what they had gone through—plodding along like animals, without hope of reward or acclamation for all they had courageously endured.

I saw one soldier, an elderly man whose uniform was almost in tatters, and his boots so worn they must have been painful to walk in, trudging alone along one of the main boulevards, leading a very small donkey attached to a cart in which were the treasures he was taking home. On top of all was a wooden cage containing live rabbits. He paid no attention to the amusement his appearance aroused in the onlookers, and, appearing to have forgotten he had ever pertained to a regiment, saw nothing but the long way ahead, toward the goal of his one absorbing desire—*Heimat*!

Later on, the troops strode through in regimental order under command of revolutionary leaders, but bearing, even then, little resemblance to the brilliant legions that had marched so haughtily through Brussels on the 20th of August 1914. The great monster had even then met its master on the banks of the Marne; but it refused to recognize the fact, or sacrifice Imperial pride in order to save the brave sons of the then prosperous nation: it threw palpitating, living hearts of those sons to the cannon, until a latent human instinct of self-preservation was awakened in them. Then those who survived understood, at last, that their real enemy was not behind those determined and avenging guns; but at home, seated upon the throne of despotism.

"Oh what a fall was there!" Not of a Cæsar deserving the eulogies of a Marcus Antonius, but the dignity of a nation worthy a nobler leader—diligent, prosperous, sober-minded Germany.

XV

N

NO sooner did the Belgians know that the occupying government had fallen, than their long-hidden, beloved tricolour appeared. Revolutionary leaders, fearing this might cause trouble, asked those now in authority to have the colours removed, and the people were requested to withdraw them, until one appeared on the Hôtel de Ville. This was accordingly done in the more important thoroughfares, but in others the flag continued to float above the moving streams of enemy forces, who showed no resentment. On the contrary, they seemed to admire the daring patriotism it expressed; and on one occasion, to my knowledge, German troops marched under those flags through the Chaussée d'Ixelles singing the Marseillaise!

In the eyes of the more intelligent one could read the anguish at their hearts, and a passion of resentment that suggested they were mentally recalling the lines of their cherished poet:

"Ich rief den Teufel und er kam,

Und ich sah ihm mit Verwundrung an;

Er ist nicht hasslich und ist nicht lahm,

Er ist ein lieber, scharmanter Mann,

Ein Mann in seiner besten Jahren,

Verbindlich und höflich und Welterfahren!

Er ist ein gescheuter Diplomat

Und spricht recht schön über Kirch und Staat." [2]

[2] I called the devil and he came,

And I on him with wonder looked;

He is not ugly and he is not lame,

He is a nice and charming man,

A man amid his best of years,

Obliging, courteous, and worldly wise,

He is a modest diplomat

And speaks right well of Church and State.

Heine.

The extraordinary spirit of reconciliation shown by these men, their total lack of humiliation in defeat, was in such strange contrast to the confident pride with which they had originally invaded Belgium that it was difficult to believe one's eyes. And in their individual self-control, in the genial smile with which they met the rabble's taunts, was a more beautiful pride than before—the pride of awakened conscience, and of that innate moral force which, despite aristocratic plottings, had before the war raised Germany to a foremost place among nations; which will no doubt raise her again, like a phœnix, from the ashes of her errors.

However, there were also dark, familiar stains to mar this dawning of a new Germany whose sun, by a strange irony of Fate, arose in Belgium! The yesterday of trickery and terrorism in certain members of that vast host still survived the night of defeat. Soldiers, by force of arms, committed daring thefts throughout the country, mostly to obtain money, of which the troops seemed in great need—must indeed have been, since some sold their weapons, bed-covers, and even their clothing. One day I heard a young under-officer bartering his boots with a café *garçon* for fifty francs, when shoes of any sort, at the time, could not be had for less than a hundred, or even more. Another evidence of this need, and one of enlightening significance, was the reckless sale of goods which they held in outlying districts of Brussels. At Forest and other suburban parts of the city, great car-loads of material, looted from shops and private houses probably months or years ago,—for the dry-goods shops of Brussels had been cleaned out quite two years before,—were offered at absurdly trivial prices. Silk-velvet, which could not be had in Brussels for less than two hundred francs, went at a mark a yard; warm woollen stuffs, which the shivering population, thinly clad in dyed cotton, could not obtain at any price in the shops, were sold—to such as deigned to buy—for an equally small sum. All these goods, taken on pretence of clothing the army—or *Belgian prisoners*!—were brought to light again, and not only stuffs, but all manner of other things, as if from some pirates' cave, were bartered back to those who had been robbed of them.

But now thieving became more bold; not by officers, but by soldiers, who did not attempt to disguise it with transparent lies.

In some cases, nevertheless, that old trick was still tried, as in that of a prominent banker, who was robbed of one hundred and twenty-five thousand francs by six soldiers. Evidently familiar with banking affairs, they presented themselves at his office after business hours, and, finding him alone with one employé, coolly demanded the sum desired. The characteristic Teuton excuse was not wanting—characteristic in its absurdity: Belgians *might* rob the army *en route*!—unarmed Belgians might loot the German vans, under guard of many hundreds of armed soldiers!—therefore large sums were demanded from all banks as guarantee!

The banker stated that he was unable to grant their demand, as there was no money available in the bank. But even as he spoke two *encaisseurs* entered; their satchels, containing the amount mentioned, were seized, the contents quietly appropriated, and the soldiers, revolver in hand, retired. The banker appealed to the revolutionary chiefs, who refused to credit his story, stating proudly that "Germans were not thieves." But by dint of perseverance, and many visits, he at last convinced them, and the money was returned to him, from army funds, just one hour before these high-minded leaders were, for some reason unknown to us, thrown out of power.

Another instance of the justice which these unfortunately displaced chiefs endeavoured to exercise, was the punishment of a German soldier, who, convicted of having murderously assaulted the woman cashier of a restaurant and stolen the contents of her *caisse*, was placed against a wall and shot—or so we were told.

The shocking original methods of German troops, in regard to places they inhabited, were also revived in these days. At one private hotel with whose proprietor we were well acquainted, their behaviour was almost beyond belief. The hotel had been requisitioned, and occupied during the war by German women, who left it in good condition. But the troops, who afterwards took possession for a few days only on their way out, reduced it to a state of uncivilized filth and wanton destruction, committing unmentionable acts whereby the up-to-date and valuable kitchen utensils, the flower-pots, and even the drawers of bureaus were rendered unfit for future service. Bombs were found under some of the beds, and the whole place had to be taken over by the State to be cleansed and examined.

Brussels, during that time, echoed day and night to spasmodic reports of firearms, sometimes of considerable duration, and consequently terrifying; at others merely an inexplicable exchange of shots.

But on Saturday the 16th and Sunday the 17th of November, the entire city trembled to blast after blast of cannon, and the shuddering shock of car-loads of ammunition set off in merciless proximity to inhabited quarters. The numerous mines buried in and about the city were also exploded—those treacherous death-traps awaiting the Allied armies, on which the occupying government had

founded its boast that Brussels would be the "bouquet of the whole war," a prediction constantly repeated.

While public attention was more or less centred on these continued explosions, fires broke out in all the railway stations, one of which was almost entirely destroyed. Many explanations were set afloat in the familiar German fashion, the most persistent being that rue Haute thieves had done it in order to pillage certain cars—an absurd suggestion, since thieves do not usually light a beacon to attract attention to their deeds. One damning fact, moreover—the simultaneity of the conflagrations—suggested some inexplicable Teuton object, perhaps mere vengeance.

The theory of vengeance was given weight by an account given us by the mayor of Charleroi. Just before the Germans withdrew, some officers visited him and, without giving a hint of their intentions, asked him to call together all the former Belgian railroad employés and send them to work at the station. The mayor, considering this a reasonable request, willingly agreed, got the men together, and set them to work. Scarcely were they all gathered in and about the station than terrific explosions took place in the yard and on near-by tracks. Fifty-eight of the unsuspecting Belgians were killed, and many others, living in the vicinity, either slain or wounded, while every window in the entire town was shattered, doors also and many objects of value. Hundreds of cars containing ammunition had been secretly attached by a fuse wire, which the Germans lighted and left to do its deadly work, while they fled into safety and were never again seen.

Some intrepid Belgians, fortunately, discovered the fuse, cut it, and thus saved two hundred and twenty car-loads of high-power explosives, some of which stood in the centre of the town and would have caused its entire wreckage.

The mayor also told us a shocking story in regard to a hospital in his town which the Germans had occupied during the war. At their departure they removed their wounded, and announced that the hospital was at his disposal. On going to visit it, he found a number of French and English wounded lying on the floor, who stated they had never had a bed, and were in a deplorable condition. Outside, in the ambulance garage, the door of which was locked, he found seventeen dead bodies of soldiers, entirely devoid of clothing and therefore impossible to identify as to nationality. In a corner of this place were heaped a ghastly collection of amputated human limbs. These and the bodies were in a state of decomposition that rendered their removal both dangerous and horrible.

A school-house that had been used to shelter troops up to the last day before the Germans left, he found in a condition quite as incredibly revolting. There were no beds; the floors, covered with a sort of mossy turf, were in a state of indescribable filth, whereon the soldiers slept and which they subjected to animal-like treatment. The stench, he said, was frightful, and the entire place so infected with vermin that the charwomen engaged to clean it were not allowed to leave the premises before being thoroughly fumigated and cleansed.

After such disclosures, could one wonder at the brutalized, unhuman appearance

of those men who dragged their weary way through Brussels—men once hardy, self-respecting tillers of the soil, or workers in other useful pursuits? Such treatment as they had endured could leave no spark of military pride in them, no consciousness of shame at defeat, no desire even for the triumph of victory.

On Sunday, the 17th of November, when Germans were seen openly in the capital for the last time, the street scenes were something at which to marvel. Everyone was abroad. Among the throng surging to and fro, through those wide avenues and boulevards so long ruled by the enemy, the familiar grey-green Teuton uniforms were relieved by the khaki of the English and Belgians, and the pale blue of the French. Many Italians and Russians were there, and one or two American airmen who had descended from a cloudless sky to see how the armistice was affecting us. Although no organized part of the Allied armies had yet entered save certain Belgians on leave to visit their families, hundreds of liberated prisoners had come to the city from German camps where they had been forced to labour for the enemy. All of these save the French, who could speak the language, were a sorry-looking lot, wandering about, unable to express themselves. So numerous were they that it was impossible for the Belgians to collect them at once and give them the assistance and comfort which they so greatly needed. The British prisoners especially were pitiable to behold in their starved condition and wretched rags—poor helpless youths, that for many months had endured such moral and physical anguish under their cruel jailers that some stated they had looked back with regret to their life in the trenches.

Most of these had found kind hearts to look after them, before that amazing Sunday when foe and friend mingled in the streets of Brussels, presenting a sight so fantastic, so unforeseen, that it seemed to lend a strange element of travesty to all that had gone before.

On the crowded platforms of trams an occasional German might be seen, pressed close to a haggard-looking Britisher worn to emaciation after months of harsh treatment by the former's compatriots; or shoulder to shoulder with a jubilant Belgian officer, hearing his response to the triumphant greeting of friends—hearing the wild applause given to units of all the Allied nations! Strange and incredible sight, in those streets where the *casque à pointe* had reigned supreme but a few days before, where—it seemed but yesterday—the hope of seeing a Belgian, English, or French uniform had been almost extinguished!

And now the spiked helmet was ignored. No voice was raised to acclaim it; the once-dreaded uniform passed unnoticed.

So far as I know, however, there was no serious outbreak or obvious resentment of conditions doubtless sorely trying to those men of defeated Germany, denied even the prospect of joyous welcome in their own country, already seething with civil strife. German soldiers—even German officers, whose rank could no longer be discerned, came face to face with surly, dark-browed Russians, and exchanged curious glances, as though furtively trying to read one another's minds; with Italians, whose eyes twinkled with the satisfaction their impulsive natures were

less able to conceal; with French, beginning to forget, in the joy of victory, the wrongs of their prison camps; and with British, into whose haggard faces they dared not look!

Even the knowledge of having discarded the Imperial yoke could not have lessened the pangs these men must have suffered, or blinded even the dullest of them to the evidence afforded by those units of wronged nations of a punishment too awful and complete to be attributed to mortal power alone.

Especially galling to them must have been the intense enthusiasm shown by the population for every Britisher. These, at the time, only wretched-looking prisoners, were the first Allies who appeared, and the sight of them sent the people into a frenzy of pride, excitement, and sympathy. Here and there, in the newly enlivened streets, would be seen a black swarm of Belgians gathered about one pitiably emaciated English lad, trying, without knowing a word of the language, to find some place of refuge to which he had been directed by the Belgian committee who looked after the prisoners. There was nothing, as a rule, to denote his nationality, save his speech, and a ragged khaki jacket, with his prison number painted on the back. In his poor, dazed face—made more haggard by several weeks' growth of beard—in the filthiness of his whole appearance, there was little to denote the bath-loving Englishman. Some told me they had not changed their shirts during eight months of imprisonment; had been forced to do hard labour, with nothing to eat but turnip soup, and one loaf of bread a day shared by four men.

The Belgians, however, quickly took them in hand, fitted them out with clean clothes, and at times carried them on their shoulders through the streets, shouting, "*Vive l'Angleterre!*" right under the noses of the Germans.

All of those to whom I spoke had been captured at a certain point near Armentières, where, owing to the collapse of an adjacent Portuguese trench, the Germans had got behind them and so cut them off. They were rather bitter regarding the "Pork and Beans," as they called the Portuguese, and stated with contempt that they had seen some of the latter, after their capitulation, pass into the German lines with hand-satchels, containing their belongings already packed!

On Monday, the 18th of November, scarcely two weeks after the first definite gleam of approaching deliverance penetrated the prison city, we realized with a strange, half-incredulous amazement that we were free! The grey uniform had disappeared; those of our deliverers were in view, and the outer world was once more a living reality! It seemed impossible—or rather like awaking abruptly from a hideous dream! No more roaring of cannon beyond the patient, proudly soaring trees of the Bois—where sad gaps bear witness of the vandal's hand; no more racking thunder of mitrailleuse from the military exercise-field, or droning of German aeroplanes over our heads; no more dread of armed soldiers intruding upon our privacy, or of tyrannical *affiches* imposing penalties and checking liberty! We could go forth into the free streets without fear of the

polizei. We could walk by lamplight at night, instead of inky darkness, and take from our windows the ugly blue paper or dark curtains by which the dim light of our houses was hooded. The door-bell could ring without causing panic, without forcing me, and others who plied the pen in secret, to rush off and conceal perilous manuscripts even before knowing who might be at the door. Buried treasures could be unearthed—newspapers read—letters written—we could breathe normally once more! Over four years of persecution, isolation, and association with misery, had led in a few days, as it seemed, to this intoxicating hour of triumph, when not only the victory we craved was attained, but the malignant world-menacing monster, vanquished by the sword of Justice, had, like a wounded scorpion, writhing in its pain, stung itself to death!

XVI

O

ON Friday, the 22nd of November, Brussels fulfilled the German prophecy in a manner little expected by those who made it, for the city really appeared the "bouquet of the war," a radiant, triumphant, glorious bouquet! Victories have been, and victories may be again, but never in all history has a capital rebounded from long suppression under such brilliant, unexampled, and ravishing conditions. As though the Power ruling heaven were in sympathy with her deliverance, a sky of Italian-like beauty canopied the day—the first really blue and cloudless sky we had seen for months—the air was crisp and transparent, the sun glorious. From every window, every balcony, floated the colours of the Allies: Belgian, English, French, Italian, Russian, Japanese, and the "stars and stripes." Many of these flags were home-made; sheets dyed and put together with feverish haste, for materials of all sorts were long since exhausted in Belgium, and the flags available were sold at a price beyond the means of most people. A German merchant of Bonn, with the opportunist cleverness of his race, had prepared a vast number of Allied flags, in time to meet, more or less, the eager demand all through Belgium. But (a fact which suggests the enterprising Teuton must have formed his scheme before America came in) there was a great dearth of American flags. These, consequently, being mostly home-made, were sometimes rather woeful imitations of the great banner, for their colours ran together lamentably during later days of rain.

Mention of the flag-making German recalls a significant incident which occurred in the first year of war, when quantities of toys, all made to appeal strongly to Belgian sentiments, and said to have come from Nuremberg, appeared for sale in Brussels at Christmas-time. Among these expensive playthings were regiments of lead German soldiers in the act of surrender to their enemies, with hands uplifted as depicted in the Allied reports after the Marne! These drew many buyers, but the crowds that gathered about them finally attracted official

attention, whereupon the toys were confiscated, while the shop which sold them was forced to close and subjected to a heavy fine.

But to return to the flags; on this glad day even the poorest had their banners prepared in time to welcome their heroic King, and multitudes gathered to acclaim his glorious return. All work ceased; even the tramway employés, important as were their services on such a day, refused large bribes rather than forgo a personal view of the wondrous scene—and no one could blame them! As there were no horses nor vehicles to be had, the stoppage of trams made matters difficult for those living at a distance. But they walked, some nearly all night, in order to secure points of view in those localities through which the King was to pass with his cortège of troops. Such crowds I have never seen; they were as impassable as a stone wall in the streets; packed close on church steps, on the cornices of buildings, on trees, at windows, on the roofs. It was a day never before known, a day never likely to return.

It must be owned that the vocal enthusiasm was considerably less than one, an American especially, could have expected. The cries at first were rather brief and spasmodic, the waving of handkerchiefs and so forth more the exception than the rule. There was none of that mad acclamation which would have welcomed, or rather will welcome, returning troops in America, none of the frenzied excitement with which we had seen French troops applauded when departing from Paris.

The reason of this, no doubt, was the people's inability to grasp an event in such tremendous contrast to the four years' sorrow which had eaten into their very souls. They had, so to speak, forgotten the meaning of joy—were too much dazed and overwhelmed by indefinable emotion to express themselves adequately.

However, when King Albert appeared, riding, and beside him his young wife—who looked rather worn after her hospital labours—tremendous acclamations arose from the massed crowds. These were repeated for Mayor Max, just returned from imprisonment, and for General Leman, the hero of Liège. Then, after a brief pause, the acclamations rose again to salute the American troops,—which were honoured with first place behind the royal cortège,—the British, French, and Belgians. Over these last brave legions enthusiasm was shown rather than uttered; emotion seemed to check the cries, as though the vast throngs were holding their breath. Then, after a moment of extraordinary silence, there was a universal electric movement, as though that mighty crowd longed to embrace them as one man.

The people could scarcely be held back from breaking the lines of troops. Old women, with scranny, bare arms uplifted, ran forward to touch them lovingly; men white with emotion, sweethearts and wives, reckless of danger, almost threw the procession into confusion by their eagerness to be recognized, or exchange a word with the brave heroes returning from a hell such as they probably never expected to survive.

That night the city was in delirium; the streets were a throbbing mass of joy-drunken beings such as was never seen before. No madness of carnival could

approach the hysterical excitement of the people in streets illuminated for the first time in two years; in the cafés, where the almost forgotten sparkle of champagne gleamed in glasses raised to the cries "*Vive la Belgique! Vive le Roi! Vivent les Alliés!*" All through the main boulevards, shouting, singing, and laughing groups were to be seen dancing in large circles, hand-in-hand, about an English, French, or other Allied prisoner who had drunk so many glasses of triumph he was generally seated on the ground, or standing unsteadily, his hollow eyes staring in a dazed but contented fashion from a face somewhat pale and thin.

In these groups all the Allied nations were blended with merry girls and boys giving vent to long-suppressed spirits. The Scotch lads, with their bare legs, flying cap-ribbons, and kilts, gave a delightfully comic touch, and added to the magic dream-effect of the whole. They were the cynosure of all eyes, the *pièce de résistance* of the foreign element. When their troops passed during the royal procession, with bag-pipes in full voice, there was a lull of astonished wonder and interest, followed by a simultaneous outburst of acclamation. And that interest and admiration did not wane in the evening; crowds thronged about them, girls clung to them,—and at times the latter exhibited rather improper curiosity with regard to their "skirts."

Now and again automobiles, once so rare a sight in Brussels, forced the dancers apart for a moment, as a swift skiff might separate bright-coloured dragon-flies dancing above the still surface of a lake, only that they may unite with more vim after its passing. In one of these cars, most of which were military, a party of young American officers with their friends were making a tour of the city after a gay supper, during which some twelve of them had sung in full, clear voices all the beautiful and original songs of their nation, much to the hearers' delight. At the head of the car floated a large American flag, borrowed from the café where they had regaled themselves. That flag was greeted with continual outbursts of applause, especially as one of the party, a man with the voice of a ship's siren, startled even the reigning hubbub with shouts of "*Vive la Belgique! Vive le Roi! Vive la Liberté!*" Hundreds of voices at once responded, screaming almost hysterically, "*Vive l'Amérique!*" "*Vive Wilson!*"—and, as though the two English-speaking nations were indissolubly united in the public mind, almost every response was accompanied by "*Vive l'Angleterre!*"

Allemande and the *casque à pointe* were forgotten. The Kaiser's black shadow had fled before the glorious angel of a liberty crowned with the fairest laurels ever gathered from the bloody fields of battle—laurels flowering with noble loyalty and jewelled with imperishable fame.

And, but a little way beyond the borders of joyous Belgium—hiding from the rage not only of those whom he had made his foes, but from that of his own people and his own allies, lurked the man who had boasted that he would subjugate an advanced and prosperous world with his "iron fist"!

William the Second, original promoter, if not sole author, of history's most

appalling crime, cowered in Holland, bereft of sceptre and throne, muttering perhaps what Milton put into the mouth of that other great Enemy of earth: "Which way I fly is Hell—myself am Hell!"

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