

BELGIAN COMMISSION MAKE SECOND REPORT ON GERMAN OUTRAGES

British Official Press Bureau
Issues Translation of Ter-
rible Indictment

SHOWS GERMANS
ACTED AS BRUTES

Showed No Respect For
Rank, Age or Sex and
Committed Monstrous Out-
rages

(Continued from page 1.)

Between Imple and Wolverthem, two wounded Belgian soldiers lay near a house which was on fire. The Germans threw these two unfortunate men into the flames. At nightfall on August 26, the German troops, repulsed by our soldiers, entered Louvain panic-stricken.

Several witnesses affirm that the German garrison which occupied Louvain was erroneously informed that the enemy were entering the town. Men of the garrison immediately marched to the station, shooting hap- hazard the while, and there met the German troops who had been repulsed by the Belgians, the latter having just ceased the pursuit.

Firing on Each Other.

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

thorities several days before. The bombardment lasted till about ten o'clock at night.

The Germans then set fire to the town. Wherever the fire had not spread, the German soldiers entered the houses and threw fire grenades, with which some of them seem to be provided. The greater part of the town of Louvain was thus a prey to flames, particularly the quarters of the upper town, comprising the modern buildings, the ancient cathedral of St. Pierre, the University buildings, together with the University Library, its manuscripts and collections, and the Municipal Theatre.

Crime Against Civilization.

The Commission considers it its duty to insist, in the midst of all these horrors, on the crime committed against civilization by the deliberate destruction of an ancient library, which was one of the treasures of Europe.

The corpses of many civilians encumbered the streets and squares. On the road from Tirlemont to Louvain alone a witness counted more than fifty. On the doorsteps of houses could be seen carbonised bodies of inhabitants, who, hiding in their cellars, were driven out by the fire, tried to escape and fell into the flames. The suburbs of Louvain suffered the same fate.

We can affirm that the houses in all the districts between Louvain and Malines, and most of the suburbs of Louvain itself, have practically been destroyed.

Sent to Germany

On Wednesday morning, Aug. 26, the Germans brought to the station squares of Louvain a group of more than 75 persons, including several

prominent citizens of the town, amongst whom were Father Colobet and another Spanish priest, and also an American priest. The men were brutally separated from their wives and children, and, after having been subjected to the most abominable treatment by the Germans, who several times threatened to shoot them, they were forced to march to the village of Campenhout in front of the German troops. They were shut up in the village church, where they passed the night.

About four o'clock the next morning a German officer told them they had better go to confession, as they would be shot an hour later. About half-past four they were liberated, shortly afterwards they were again arrested by a German brigade, which forced them to march before them in the direction of Malines. In reply to a question of one of the prisoners, a German officer said they were going to give them a taste of the Belgian quickfiring before Antwerp. They were at last released on the Thursday afternoon at the gates of Malines.

Fate of Mystery.

It appears from other witnesses that several thousand male inhabitants of Louvain who had escaped the shooting and the fire were sent to Germany for a purpose which is still unknown to us.

The fire at Louvain burnt for several days. An eye-witness who left Louvain on Aug. 30 gave the following description of the town at that time: "Leaving Weert St. George's," he says, "I only saw burnt-down vil- lages and half-crazy peasants, who, on meeting anyone, held up their hands as a sign of submission. Be- fore every house, even those burnt down, hung a white flag, and the burnt rags of them could be seen among the ruins."

"At Weert St. George's I question- ed the inhabitants on the causes of German reprisals, and they affirmed most positively that no inhabitant had fired a shot, that in any case the arms had been previously collected, but that the Germans had taken vengeance on the population because a Belgian soldier belonging to the gendarmerie had killed an Uhlan.



"The population still remaining in Louvain has taken refuge in the sub- urb of Heverle, where they are ex- tremely crowded. They have been cleared out of the town by the troops and the fire. The fire started a little beyond the American College, and the town is entirely destroyed, ex- cept for the Town Hall and the sta- tion. Furthermore, the fire was still burning to-day, and the Germans, far from taking any steps to stop it, seemed to feed it with straw, an in- stance of which I observed in the street adjoining the Town Hall.

The cathedral and the theatre are destroyed and have fallen in, as also the library; in short, the town has the appearance of an ancient ruined city, in the midst of which only a few drunken soldiers move about, carry- ing bottles of wine and liquors, while the officers themselves, seated in arm-chairs round the tables, drink like their men.

"In the street the swollen bodies of dead horses rot in the sun, and the smell of fire and putrefaction pervades the whole place."

Commission's conclusions.

The commission has not yet been able to obtain information about the fate of the mayor of Louvain and of other notables who were taken as hostages. The commission is able to draw the following conclusions from the facts which have so far been brought to its notice.

In this war the occupation of any place is systematically accompanied and followed—sometimes even pre- ceded—by acts of violence towards the civil population, which acts are con- trary both to the usages of war and to the most elementary principles of humanity.

The German procedure is every- where the same. They advance along a road, shooting inoffensive passers- by, particularly bicyclists, as well as peasants working in the fields.

In the towns or villages where they stop they begin by requisitioning food and drink, which they consume till in- toxicated.

Sometimes from the interior of de- serted houses, they let off their rifles at random, and declare it was the in- habitants who fired. Then the scenes of fire, murder, and especially pillage, begin, accompanied by acts of delib- erate cruelty, without respect of sex or age. Even where they pretend to know the actual person guilty of the acts they allege they do not content themselves with executing him sum- marily, but they seize the opportunity to decimate the population, pillage the houses, and then set them on fire.

After a preliminary attack and mas- sacre they shut up the men in the church, and then order the women to return to their houses, and to leave their doors open all night.

Screens of Civilians.

From several places the male popu- lation has been sent to Germany, there to be forced, it appears, to work at the harvest, as in the old days of slavery. There are many cases of the inhabi- tants being forced to act as guides, and to dig trenches and entrench- ments for the Germans.

Numerous witnesses assert that during their marches, and even when attacking, the Germans place civilians—men and women—in their front ranks, in order to prevent our sol- diers firing. The evidence of Belgian officers and soldiers show that Ger- man detachments do not hesitate to display either the white flag or the Red Cross flag, in order to approach our troops with impunity.

Fire on Ambulances.

On the other hand they fire on our ambulances and maltreat the ambu- lance men. They maltreat, and even

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kill the wounded. The clergy seem to be particularly chosen as subjects for their brutality. Finally, we have in our possession expanding bullets, which had been abandoned by the enemy at Werchter, and we possess doctor's certificates showing that wounds must have been inflicted by bullets of this kind.

The documents and evidence on which these conclusions rest will be published in due course.

The President,
(Signed) Cooreman.
The Members of the Commission,
(Signed) Ct Goblet d'Alviella,
Ryckmans,
Strauss,
Van Cutsem.
The Secretaries,
(Signed) Chevalier Ernst de
Brunswyck Orts.

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