

Belgian Officers Were All Corrupted

German Money Bought Them All Except Gen. Leman the Heroic Defender of Liege

From the Canadian Courier Special Correspondent
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I HAVE just succeeded in getting to Holland after three weeks under the iron laws of German militarism. I even dared to go as far as Cologne and Dusseldorf, but I concluded that prudence was the better part of valour and came back to the more kindly light of a neutral land. I have covered every point of interest in Belgium and incidentally entered into the very heart of the flight of refugees from that stricken little kingdom.

And after all there is but one thought uppermost in my mind: If the Kaiser is truly the sword of God, and if his cause is, as he claims, divinely inspired, then I wonder if there really is a God. A defenceless people driven from their homes, innocent women and children brutally done to death, a whole land laid in waste and ruins, terrorism spread everywhere by means of fire and sword—that is the result of the Kaiser's divine mission in Belgium, and all because this heroic little people resolved to defend their neutrality against the evil designs of the War Lord of Europe. But Germany must and will pay a terrible price for her crime. Of that I am convinced. Civilization itself will impose that penalty.

Sometimes I wonder if the people of America accept seriously the published statements of the German hired assassins of public opinion who are now endeavouring to smother the truth and possibly win a little sympathy for their own cause—if cause there be? But then, again, my unbounded confidence in the intelligence and good judgment of my fellow Americans dissipates this thought. I have read many of these missiles flung at the heart and mind of Americanism, and when one sees with his own eyes conditions that confirm their falsity, then, and not until then, can he appreciate the seriousness of the wrong inflicted upon the Belgian people.

The saddest feature of all is the endeavour to fasten upon the Belgian people, and particularly Belgian soldiers, a reputation for brutalities and cruelties that far outstrip the worst efforts of the Germans. But the absurdity of this at once suggests itself. There is no people more kind-hearted and more generously disposed than the Belgian people, and in their war upon the common enemy they have done what Germany has absolutely refused to do—they have observed the laws of international warfare and have lived up to the highest standard of humanitarian demands. If a child should strike you with his rattle when in a spirit of childish glee, is that good and just reason that you should immediately proceed to cut off his feet and hands and to subject him to all forms of physical torture? The whole world cries out against the barbarous treatment of the non-combatants in Belgium, and if that is German "culture," then I pray to Heaven that culture will cease to be.

Eye-witness to German Atrocities.

I have seen little children with their hands cut off so as to destroy the possibility that in later years he would become a soldier. I have seen mothers brutally mutilated because they sought to defend their offspring. I have seen young girls violated by drunken German soldiers, and oftentimes with a bayonet thrust through the mouth. In Dinant, 837 civilians were passed to the mitrailleuse. In Termonde and Louvain and Alost, cruelties of a parallel order have been practised, and only the other day, in front of Antwerp, I saw a father placed against the wall of his little cottage and, in full view of his wife and children, riddled with German bullets, because he refused to give information to the enemy. I could recite for hours the record of the barbarism which I have seen with my own eyes, and German propagandists can labour from now until the millenium to wipe out the shame of the crime they have committed upon the defenceless little people of Belgium; but of one thing they must ever be mindful—"Truth once crushed to earth will surely rise again."

The fall of Antwerp has been heralded in the German press as a mighty triumph of German arms, but although at this particular juncture it would be folly to seek to discuss the truth in all its detail, I can give to my readers in Canada and the United States this one significant thought—that German money and German spies are a thousand times more effective than their big 42-centimetre howitzers. Antwerp was sold, as Namur was sold, by traitorous Belgian officers, and this only serves to add to the sorrow and suffering of the thousands of refugees who have been driven across into Holland or who have sought out a temporary home in England or France. Corrupt officers have been courtmartialled and other forms of punishment have been inflicted upon those who preferred German money to their own personal honour and duty. After the war, the whole story of Antwerp will be published, and it will reveal to the world a record of treachery and treason that would baffle the most imaginative brain. In the meantime, you must content yourself



BUT BELGIAN SOLDIERS WERE LOYAL TO A MAN.

Even youths too young to fight are pressed into digging trenches for the army.

with the knowledge, which in itself is highly significant, that in many instances the Belgian troops are being officered by British or French officers. I am creditably informed that the British commander refused to proceed otherwise, and King Albert himself has given expression to thoughts that reveal a deeply wounded heart.

King Albert Inspires His Men.

The feeling amongst the Belgian soldiers against their officers runs very high, and it would be suicide for some of them to take a place before their own men. Of course there are some good officers. But of one man every Belgian has a right to be proud, and that is their gallant King. Facing difficulty and danger, he manfully stays with his troops. Heroic almost to a fault, his presence has a wonderfully inspiring effect upon his men, and evidence of this was found in the remarkable demonstration at Ostend the other day when he made a review of the reorganized Belgian forces—this same King who refused to leave with the members of his government for a haven in France, but preferred to stay with the Belgian soldiers. It was truly typical of this ruler, who, through his own pluck and daring, has fired the hearts of his gallant little army with a spirit of patriotism that the fiery sword of Germany can never obliterate.

And here let me pay a tribute to these little men of iron—the Belgian soldiers. The world expected something of these men, but little did it anticipate the magnificent record of bravery and endurance which they have created. I have been in the trenches with these men and I know what they can do. They do not know the meaning of fear, and I have seen them stay in the trenches for four long days and nights with but scanty provision, and then I have seen them rise and make a forced march to cut off a German column, and the dash and spirit of that charge would stir the imagination. If the German soldiery has played the role of barbarous savages, there is one truth that has been forced home to it on more occasions than one—that the Belgians can fight and they know how to suffer and endure. Ask any doctor or nurse in any military hospital where Belgian wounded have been treated. Unflinchingly and without a murmur, these gallant little men submit oftentimes to the most serious operations, and each breath carries that simple expression of a grateful heart: "Merci, Monsieur!"

And the Men Are Heroes.

And to think what these men have endured! Oftentimes betrayed by their own officers, they have fought on till death; and it was no uncommon sight in the field before Antwerp to see a whole regiment fighting without an officer to direct. I saw a regiment of infantry sent into the trenches near Lierre without a bit of ammunition, and when, under the withering fire of the German machine guns, they rose to flee to a place of safety, the inhuman officer sent them back to charge with the bayonet. I have seen whole sections practically sold to the enemy, their position being revealed to the German gunners by means of signals passed from a neighbor-

ing windmill; but defying their officers these men fought their way out though their losses were heavy.

The other day, near Mell, there were British, French and Belgians in the trenches. It was necessary to bring up the artillery. All went well until the hastening artillery was exposed in an open spot not far from the railway station. Suddenly, a man in an upper position waved a flag. The German guns had been previously fixed for that range, and the scheme worked most successfully. A large section of the artillery was destroyed. How often have British columns been led into the hands of the enemy by traitorous guides!

Ask any Belgian gunner how often their officers have run away, carrying focussing instruments and all, and leaving the helpless gunners to fire, they knew not where. And then it seemed that the climax was to be held for the last tragic hours at Ostend, when hundreds of thousands of refugees were jostling amongst the soldiers and wounded in an effort to get away from the approaching Germans. The Red Cross searched for hours to find autos to convey the wounded to the quays for transportation to England, but none could be found, and in most cases the poor wounded men who had fought and bled for their country had to drag themselves on foot to the steamers while they looked on at the officers, who whirled about the little seaside city in luxuriously equipped cars and in many instances carrying their fair admirers. It was scandalous, to say the least. Many of the wounded never reached a place on the boats, owing to the density of the crowds on the quays, and they trudged many miles to reach in safety the Holland frontier. I can quote one instance of this.

Correspondent Aids the Wounded.

I was forced, with thousands of others, to walk from Knock to Sluis, a distance of seven kilometres. All along the route I was passing that endless train of refugees fleeing to Holland so as to escape the torture of German occupation. Suddenly I came upon a number of wounded Belgian soldiers. To them every step was ever-increasing pain. I waited for the first vehicle coming along. It was filled with young and old. I ordered the men to descend. At first they demurred, but with the flash of a pistol they came down, and then I assisted the wounded men to a place in the machine.

By this time hundreds had gathered, for the report had circulated that I was an English officer. All agreed in the wisdom of my act, particularly so after I had read them a lecture on the care of wounded men. Some then commenced a systematic search along the route for other wounded, and, suffice to say, accommodation was found for all wounded men.

Would that I could give you a more elaborate picture of the trials and sufferings of Belgian soldiery; but by far the greatest pain of all was inflicted through the treachery of officers, many of whom were connected directly or indirectly with German families.

This same treachery was extended to British