

Her head rested against his shoulder, his hand clasped her thin wrist. It was not necessary to disturb them; they were dead.

In the inextinguishable confusion horses maddened by burns plunged blindly, Belgian dogs (than which none are more faithful), crept with piteous whines to their owner's feet. A woman carrying her dead baby arrived from burning Vise. The Germans killed one in every three. "The countryside is famine-stricken, covered with starving animals. I feared to trust my baby's grave." She could say no more. All day and all night for a week children with hollow cheeks sobbed as they tried to swallow food, nursing mothers screamed as their pain racked babies moaned, and men held their tortured heads between their hands attempting self control. One tried to tell me:

Before we knew there was war the Uhlans were upon us. We, being a peaceful people, thought to save our home. They acted like savages—maniacs. During this month of Brest, I was swept by massacres, pillage, names of times. Twenty villages are burned, fifty sacked, a hundred looted. Fearing for our women and children we fled in the night. Like shadows we passed the Prussian sentries. For us all is gone. For our children there is hope—in the Americas. There the rich and the poor live at peace, free from the iniquity of imperial power. I call God to witness.

A white-haired priest, so exhausted that he was almost paralyzed, held up a warning hand. When I brought him a panikin of water he dropped down with fatigue. "All my life," he said, "I have watched the world growing better and better, have seen men struggling to overcome the brutal propensities, parents striving to give their children wider opportunities. And now—decades of effort gone in an instant—millions of lives made miserable—the poor people who have all to lose ignorant of the cause. Five empires in arms at a madman's word! How long, oh Lord, how long, will one man be able to make Thy people suffer these things?"

Next day the Germans entered Brussels, ten full army corps being in Belgium. From the roof of the hotel I watched every night how the line of burning villages had come nearer and nearer. One evening I was dining with the American Ambassador and his wife, his Excellency taking that way to see me regularly and so make sure that I was still safe. Being an American I could do without danger in the city dare attempt. But as we went to the table, thinking to have a long homely talk, Mr. Brant Whitlock's first secretary brought him a hurried message. In three minutes he was out of the house and into his motor car our flag at the wind screen. In five he was off, goodness knew where. For word had just come in that the Prussians, wreaking vengeance on Louvain, had taken forty prisoners—taken them as you please, from beneath the flag of the American College. Mr. Whitlock got his priests and put them where they would be safe. Also, the Prussians took no more hostages from beneath the star-spangled banner. Just between ourselves, the Minister confessed to me that he was not at all sure of his powers in this case, but that he had never known a priest who was not worthy of all the respect he (a real public servant of the country) could pay them. Therefore he intended to protect them to the full extent of international law. Next day he had me to protect. This is how it came about.

Nurse Marie Felicie, of the French Red Cross, who had been goodness itself to "my" relief station in several critical cases, sent asking that I should come to her at the hospital. I had seen her last at midnight, when she came from the operating room calm and confident; six hours later her face was white. "There is no milk in Brussels," she said. Though I was laughing, she said, "By that time there were a good many things wanting in Brussels. 'And the babies,' continued Nurse Marie Felicie. Then I saw the horror. 'Therefore,' she continued, 'we are agreed, four of us, women of different countries, to wait upon the military governor and to lay our case before him. Will you come?' Two hours later we five were at the Hotel de Ville. The Governor (it was then the bully, Brigadier Jurdovsky) sent out his aide. By common consent we tacitly waived nationality, each speaking a foreign language. The Englishwoman spoke German, the Frenchwoman Flemish, the Belgian English. And we told the aide: 'The outposts prevent dairy carts entering the city—therefore babies starve.' The Prussian lieutenant's silver strapped shoulders rose ever so slightly. 'We trust, Herr Lieutenant, that milk farmers may come to the gate as neutrals.' The soldier's upstanding monocle twitched with amusement.

"The women insist," said I, "that we women, on our honor, be allowed to pass the barrier and return with peasants' milk carts, submitting to all proper search." (Again that arrogant smile.) "It appears we must demand," said Sister Marie Felicie. "Well, then, we demand, that some of your soldiers who are idle, and yet, I hope, willing, be allowed to go out and bring in milk enough for the starving babies of Brussels." Then the German spoke: "His words snapped from his stiff lips 'Mesdames, you ask the impossible—the absurd. Campaigns are not blocked by trifles. One thing you have to learn. There

are no men, women, children—only enemies—when Germany makes war!"

Next day 100 babies died in Brussels, and I tried to cable to my friend, the President of the United States. In three hours I was, to all intents and purposes, a prisoner of war. My passport was signed by the Etai Major to let me go out of the city by motor or troop train, but get out I must. Three American war correspondents caught trying to reach the front went with me. We asked to be sent to Ostend. Instead, the German official mind being what it is, the military governor ordered that we be taken by troop train to Liege, via Louvain. That was the very day the Germans fired Louvain. As our heavy train pulled into the station at sunset, Louvain was aflame. The railway station was crowded with 1,500-2,000 Uhlans all apparently drunk with alcohol or excitement. They hauled their loot and carried through the baby farms' investigation, without harm. So I gave Mr. Whitlock my promise to go back to Holland by motor, and left him praying prayers that the military governor of Brussels would not get wind of my return. That night at midnight I was safe in Maastricht. Next morning at 6 a. m. I was chief of Police acting for the Netherlands War Minister. When I was taken before the Police Commissioner, it was his wife against mine—and he was a Hollander! So I challenged him to prove his charge, insisting that I could not be called a war correspondent since I did not know a battery from a battalion and had no wish to know. The poor man was peeved and began to explain. Then I knew that he was lost. And, rising with haste, I never trouble ourselves with unpleasant trifles which may be left to our men. You have made a very serious charge against an American citizen. You must prove it. I will not discuss the matter. I prefer to refer it to my diplomatic representative at the Hague." Then that long-suffering commissioner climbed down. He fairly begged me not to involve poor little Holland in unpleasant discussions with the American ambassador. And, after a due interval for repentance to permeate, I graciously consented to be mollified. Also, I accepted my liberty and disappeared. I never returned to the hotel. My luggage is there yet, and any poor refugee who wants it may have it for the asking. For second sight warned me that when the police commissioner reported to the Minister for War it might not be so fine for the "war correspondent." Also, I had something else to do besides arguing with Hollanders. Every minute counted if I intended to find out what had become of the lost people of Louvain. Which brings me to the last but one of my Belgian memories.

Here's hoping you are not tired of reading! From now on I can refer to fairly definite carbons, so that you may quote dates and numbers without misgiving. On August 24 Louvain was a city of approximately 50,000 people. On August 26, 27, 28 it was a city in flames. The university, the cathedral, the art treasures were destroyed. More awful still, not a man, woman or child of the population remained to testify what had happened. In villages 3 miles away, in Tirlémont, an important town 15 miles to the east, in Brussels, 20 miles to the west, practically nothing was known of the lost people of Louvain. Without investigation, or explanation, an autocratic war lord crowded them on to troop trains and railroaded them into Germany. The van of that army of exiles—approximately 10,000 women and children—left Louvain on the night of August 27. Five Americans, practically prisoners of war on troop train, saw the heart-stricken victims assemble. Other trains, crowded with 20,000 men prisoners, are said to have followed during the next two days. This is probably true. On the night of August 30 heavy trains filled with exiles from Louvain were stalled at Liege. I know because I was there. Released from arrest as a "war correspondent," I hurried down the river to Liege. In an inviolated city, filled with refugees and invaders, no one notices a stranger unless he is a soldier. Below in the railway cut stood trains full of weeping women. A few overdriven volunteers distributed bottles of water. To secure a bucket and cup made one a volunteer. Throats parched with sobbing, eyes saturated with tears, they crowded to the train windows pleading to be told where they were bound. One calmer than the rest cried as a tired child cries whining her story.

This is Sunday, you say. Then ten days ago the Germans entered Louvain. Then we knew we must suffer. The city had been King Albert's headquarters. When the King and the army withdrew Louvain was an unfortified city filled with women and children, old people and priests. We being unprotected the Prussians came upon us, the Ninth Army Corps. They made barracks of our churches, stabled their horses in our schools, stacked their stores in the Halls. The crypt of the cathedral was filled with their small ammunition. The people of Louvain had all been disarmed for a week. A man paid with his life for concealing a revolver. Night after night Uhlans entered our houses to search for rifles. Then they made us prisoners. Only one of a family could leave the house once a day. It was forbidden to light a candle after dark lest the flame might serve

as a signal. In the streets were 40,000 soldiers, all smoking their loot of the cigar shops, half drunk with wine and excitement. The Germans repulsed at Wavre, routed at Diest, fell back on Louvain. These were all day cavalry fights. The returning Uhlans were wild. And the German governor forbade us to close our house doors day or night! Without our men, without weapons, we women lived in terror. Such a state cannot continue. Tuesday night the city was in an uproar. Some claimed that the firemen were coming in from Tirlémont; some cried that Russian and French students of the university had fired upon the soldiers. No one wanted to learn the truth. Before midnight Uhlans without bayonets drove us from our homes. Men, women and children were marched into the fields near St. Veronica. There we sank down in a vast crowd. Only the children cried, the others dared not moan. There were armed guards and bayonets on all sides lined up, then they were marched away. The guards told us that we should never see them again, that they were going into Germany, to work in some mines. Before noon the women with children were called out. Heartbroken and weeping they staggered on to the road. It took hours to get them in order. Then one, seeing a ploughed field, ran to it and scooped some of the earth into her neckerchief. Hundreds of others did likewise. The soldiers told us across Belgium into Germany. We women who remained waited—and waited. It was hot, but there was no sun. The sky was hidden by the smoke of the burning city. Our guards brought us water and a little food, but we could not eat. At night we crept together and prayed that God would protect us. In the dark we could see the fire spreading and spreading.

Just here I want to tell you, Father, that all over Belgium and in France it is practically accepted that German commanders turn over every captured city or town to the troops, who are then free to violate the women. Under normal conditions no woman will acknowledge such suffering. Here, with thousands of women broken by anguish, I looked to discover the truth on this point if only that I might report it to my Government, which, in the court of last appeal, will add the dust in the balance—the dust we call public opinion. Ten years of my life were spent in giving or retaining releases among the 30,000 prisoners in Massachusetts, so that I believe I am able to extract difficult acknowledgments. But in answer to my repeated question I specially recalled woman knew of crime committed on another woman I heard this—in various forms—but always with the same sense.

On the night when we (710,000 women), lay in the fields near St. Veronica German officers came to us, many officers, and each said, many times, to the women who could hear him: 'You must lie down and rest. You must recommend yourself to the Madonna and go to sleep. You must believe that you are safe, that she will protect you. In God's Name, be still. We are Bavarians, we are not Prussians.' Working from this evidence I have come to distrust any report of the wholesale violation of Belgian women.

To resume the prisoner's story. "After two days, or three, I cannot remember, we too were put into troop trains. We do not know what our relations are, or how we shall ever find them. We do not know where we are going. Some of the guards say we must go to a place called Badernon. But they are mistaken. Badernon is not a place for women at all. We have heard of it often. It is an enormous camp between Cologne and Berlin, the permanent camp of five German army corps. Being prisoners we can do nothing but wait and pray, pray lest le bon Dieu forget the women of Louvain."

Padre, that settled it for me. If such things were being done in Louvain I felt that some neutral should learn what was going on within the cordons (approximately 100 by 500 yards) from which the male population had largely disappeared. At home I live alone with my maids, with Voltaire (a cat) and Mahmood Aberhammed Pasha (a terrier) and once a year I drop out of an ultra-respectable existence to taste real life as a working woman; choosing some industry in which the remedial legislation needed to safeguard the workers can only be secured when investigation has discovered legal evidence. Having been a cotton laundry worker, etc. I felt sure that I could pass in a crowd as a Belgian refugee. But to do so I had to get to Tirlémont on wheels. In Liege all the horses were commandeered, and no motor car could be rented. Finally, I found one man (whose name cannot be mentioned until the great peace is signed) who, believing I could help his poor country, offered to take me in his car into the battle zone. It was all settled, even to the country woman's skirt I was to wear, when my hostess' brother came to dinner. He seemed a harmless old priest, rather dense, or at least I thought so. Quite naturally, his sister told him what the following day would bring. He put three innocent sounding questions to answer which disclosed all my plans, and then said: "My child, are you prepared to die?" Well, you know my

answer. I am not, or rather I was not at that minute, nor have I the least wish to die. But if you will believe it, that harmless looking old padre—he looked as mild as a rabbit—stiffened up and informed me that until I was prepared to die he would commandeer the only obtainable motor in Liege! Now I come from a country where we recognize a show-down at the drop of a gun. So I said, "Mon Pere, I have done some odd things to make an investigation successful, but repenting of my sins is about the queerest. Howsoever, here goes." Whereupon he heard my confession. But observe! Never at any time did he try to dissuade me from attempting to walk across the cordons. He merely asked with quite charming friendliness, that I should try to notify him through my ambassador when I had finally reached safety. When I wrote him a week later I was able to tell him that, except for being hit by a Uhlans' gun, I had never once been mistreated, nor even questioned as to why I was in the military zone, nor where I was going. Which gives me reason for some surmise, and makes me less prone to liken quiet old priests to rabbits. At Tirlémont I dropped out of the motor, joined 300 refugees, and with them walked to Holland. We ate raw beets and slept in the fields. I wrote my notes on the pale silk lining of my gown.

To return to the story you want: West of Tirlémont, where the smoke of burning Herant darkened the sky, stands an ancient church, white flags of peace still hanging from its bombarded belfry. On the shattered steps lay a dog of Flanders, his red cross blanket and first aid barrel shot to pieces by invaders' bullets. The two are signs of the Prussian passing. Herent was fired because a father resented an insult to his daughter. The heart of Hougarde was bombarded to be avenged on peasants who sought to protect their homes by destroying the bridge over the village brook. There were neither rifles nor ammunition in either place, probably never had been. The town of Tirlémont (where small arms were stored in a desperate attempt at self-protection) has been badly shot up, but still stands—as a Prussian commandery. In Brussels and the Belgium where German soldiers are exposed to foreign scrutiny they conceal their regimental numbers, and German officers refuse to give their names. Thus atrocities are the work of anonymous men. Within the cordons such safeguards are considered unnecessary. Sacked Tirlémont was filled with swaggering dragoons of the 66th, 26th and 34th regiments of the line. The Place du Marche was crowded with machine guns on whose steel shields each gun's crew had recorded the mills demolished and unfortified villages shelled. On the walls of the fifteenth century church placards in three languages purported to give the news:

"The English are being driven into the sea. (August 29 September 5.)"

"The French have retreated to Paris."

"Germany's campaign is all over but the collection of indemnities."

"Two refugee women at my elbow sobbed pitifully as they read. A scowling Uhlans reproved them with abdominal blows of his musket butt. Utterly cowed we turned away. Tirlémont was not Belgian any longer, said the proclamation, but now part of a conquered German province."

The straight, tree-shaded road to Gromede was crowded with homeless wanderers. Hundreds of waned faced women, children whimpering at their skirts, scores of ageing men in self-respecting homespun, a determined little boy carrying his pet kid, a girl clasping her bolt of wedding linen, youths with the essential part of their textile tools strapped to their backs, strong old women staggering under huge jars, dogs tugging at overlaid trucks, a cart with a white flag, a dying child in its father's arms, a paralytic, a blind man, all of them homeless, penniless and heartbroken. Yet in their misery they found heart to pity sharper sorrow.

Cries of sympathy greeted a derelict woman passing on a wheelbarrow, a sister of John Mackin, the Belgian army scout, whom German soldiers buried alive head downward, and who was found by Belgians and disinterred too late.

In silence, terrified, we crowded down the once peaceful roads, possessed humbly held in our upraised hands. Every few yards stood a German sentry, an over-trained, lives were forfeit because men armed with fowling pieces sought to defend their homes. Just beyond lay the five kilometre chemin pour Tongres, last stand of a desperate people. The elm trees felled to protect citizen sharpshooters had hardly died, but already Tongres was as old as tragedy. In the sunlit square troops of the 12th and the 52nd Brandenburg haggled over their loot. For Tongres (a fort) a place of defence since the days of Caesar, resisted in violation and was for reprisal, shelled and given to sack. Now no one may leave the house without a military permit, no one light a candle after dark. In the twilight the shattered streets echoed with the agonized sobbing of broken-hearted women. The burghers, peace loving until righteousness provoked, have been driven by Uhlans none (save their captors) know where. "Halt, or I fire." It was the last sentry in stricken Belgium. We stood to show our passports. Just 2 miles away rose the spires of Maa-

stricht. In Holland. A pearl grey mist shrouded the ravished land. Men and women who had faced death with fortitude walked on, blinded by tears. In the twilight we could see a spectral barrier, a misty lantern and the tricolor of the Netherlands. "Stand; friends or enemies?" The refugees voices answered, then, with aspirations of thankfulness they stepped across the frontier. My turn came at last. The captain of the barrier scanned my American passport. His glance met mine shrewdly. "You are an American journalist," he accused; "enter Holland, but do not remain." Our land, like yours, must be neutral. God guards the countries where there is no war.

And that ended my memories of Belgium in agony. It was like walking across the Ireland of Cromwell. You will, I think, be glad to know that 2,000,000 have been sent from America especially for the women and children refugees in Holland. Presently I go back to see what is being done for their comfort, to cross the cordons I know, and to look for "old friends." And then I am off for Germany, to study what the people are thinking. But one word more, a word which may not have reached you: the fate of the prince Archbishop of Lemberg (in Austrian Galicia), Mgr. Szepietzky.

Since the German entry into Brussels I have had a growing sense that this will end as a religious war. The first inkling came on the night when Brussels tolled its bells because the Pope was dead. German troops then entering the city sought to drown that tolling by shouting all together—thousands and thousands of them—Luther's hymn. Now Germany seeks to rouse the Moslem against the Christians of the East. It may be that I will go to the Levant after Christmas should they develop.

Now comes the religious war element from the Allies' side. I am indebted to clever Miss Katherine Hughes for this information. His Excellency, Monsignor Count Szepietzky, Primate of the Ruthenian Church, has been sent as a convict to Siberia by the Russians who captured Lemberg. If you have not the data about this I will send you my notes. And so, good night. It is really quite late, and if you ever saw me you would realize that I cannot afford to lose much beauty sleep. More's the pity!

Pray a prayer for this sinner when at the altar, and believe me, with earnest good wishes for the success of your Magazine.

Very sincerely yours,
MARY BOYLE O'REILLY

We hope and believe that the fear of a "religious" war is not well-founded, but we have not wished to change any of our kind correspondents' own words.

Miss Boyle O'Reilly seems to say less than she could say; seems to wish us to read between the lines in some places.

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