

The Battle of Liege

A Modern Example of the Old-Time Story of David and Goliath

MOST surprising of the events which have marked the first week of the general European conflagration is the campaign in Belgium. No one but the military experts anticipated a German invasion of the little kingdom which lies on the northern boundary of France. In August, 1870, when Germany invaded France, all the German armies entered France, between Luxembourg on the north and the Swiss boundary on the south. In those days Alsace and Lorraine were French provinces, and Strassburg was the chief French fortress. After the fall of Strassburg, which held out for several months, the end was in sight. Alsace and Lorraine passed to Germany, and the French boundary was pushed westward. During the forty-four years that have elapsed since these events, France has been steadily and persistently fortifying this new boundary. To-day, a chain of forts extends from Verdun and Nancy on the north to the Jura Mountains on the border between France and Switzerland. That chain of fortifications explains the campaign.

Belgium, being neutral, with its neutrality guaranteed by the great powers of Europe, had no line of fortifications along its German boundary. To get to Paris without crossing the French fortifications, it was necessary for Germany to violate Belgian neutrality, and send her columns from Cologne to Sedan via Liege and Namur. Apparently, the Germans believed that Belgium, with its puny little army of 40,000 regulars and ancient forts, would offer no resistance. The egotism of Germany saw only a pleasant march across the Belgian provinces of Liege, Namur and Luxembourg, without serious opposition until the invaders reached the French border.

If ever a great power met with a huge disappointment Germany met with one in Belgium. Backed up by assurances of assistance from France and Great Britain, King Albert ordered his troops to defend Liege to the best of their ability. The result gives Belgium an honoured place in the history of modern nations. Nothing more heroic, nothing more skilful, and nothing more daring has been seen in military warfare of recent times than the defence of Liege by General Leeman. Not only did the little force withstand the shock of the huge advance guard of the German army, but it inflicted such damage that the invading hosts were seriously delayed. For more than three days the plucky Belgians held the Kaiser's invincible troops at bay. So great was the slaughter that the Germans were led to ask for an armistice during which they might bury their dead.

An official statement by the Belgian War Office contains the following illuminating comment:

"For many days our little army by tenacity and courage rendered highly valuable service to the French army, which for some days under forced march has been hurrying to our assistance and now occupies a considerable portion of our territory."

"Hundreds of German prisoners have been captured. These are chiefly cavalymen. The spirit of the German soldiers lacks enthusiasm. They appear to be fighting lethargically, while their officers endeavour to pass themselves off as Frenchmen."

MUCH depended upon this first engagement, as much depends upon the first engagement in the North Sea, for it is more than forty years since the armies of the great powers of Europe were tried out in actual conflict. Everything is largely a matter of theory. Whether German methods are better than French methods or better than British methods is an undecided point. Each army has its own particular systems and theories. These have yet to be tested, but, apparently, doughty little Belgium, of whose military prowess no one has ever sufficient to hold the powerful Germans in check. If Belgium can make such a showing of the German army, what will the French and British armies do when they come into conflict with the German hosts? Is it reasonable to suppose that French and British soldiers will be less effective in the field than the Belgian troops? While it is not safe to draw a general conclusion from this first battle, most of us will hereafter have less fear of the much-vaunted German system of training. The great machine which was supposed to be invincible has broken down at its first encounter. While it may do better

later on, it has gained nothing in prestige from this defeat.

Belgian valour may have saved the French. The German advance guard has been checked at Liege, and will again be checked at Namur, which is only a few miles to the southwest, and which is also strongly fortified. Before the German troops reach Namur, a huge French and British force will be on Belgian soil. The British are reported to have landed at Dunkirk, which is only about one hundred and forty miles from Namur and Liege. Even before the British troops had landed on the French coast, French cavalry were reported in the neighbourhood of Liege. When the second battle of the war occurs the finest generals of the French and British armies will be present to give advice and assistance. The army of eight hundred thousand men, under the command of the belligerent Crown Prince of Germany, will find its task increased.

Whether or not it will be able to push back the defenders to the French boundary depends largely

harbour and district in China, covering about 200 square miles, which was leased from China for ninety-nine years in March, 1898. Kaiser Wilhelm's land comprises part of southeast New Guinea, and comprises seventy thousand miles. The other possessions include the Bismarck Archipelago, the Solomon Islands; Caroline, Pelew and Marianne Islands; Marshall Islands; and the Samoan Islands.

The question now arises, "Who will get the German possessions if Germany is vanquished in war?" Great Britain is almost the only power in a position to send expeditions to take possession of these German colonies. Therefore, the burden of taking possession of these territories will fall upon the British Empire. When the final treaty is prepared, the question must be considered and answered.

It is probable that Germany will make a strong effort to retain them, as the loss of them would put an end to the dream of Germany as a world-wide power. And with an end to such a dream Germany would sink to the level of a Spain, her people half-hearted and slow of pride. And if she does the world will reflect that she brought it on herself.

Taking Mulhausen

ON July 15th, 1870, Napoleon III. of France declared war on Germany.

By the end of July, Germany had massed half a million soldiers on the French frontier. The first fight was at Weissenburg, on August 4th—the same date as forty-four years later, Germany declared war on France, Belgium and Great Britain. On October 27th, 100,000 French capitulated at Metz. On January 28th, 1871, Paris was surrendered. On May 10th, peace was signed and Alsace-Lorraine passed under the German flag.

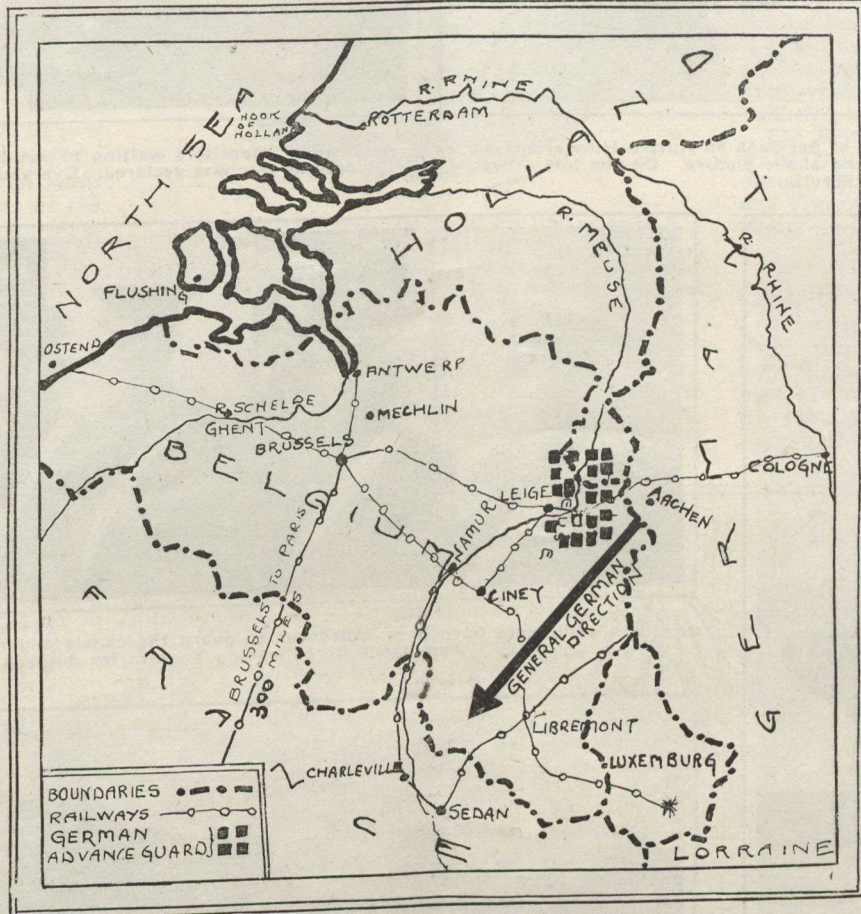
Mulhausen, with an umlaut on the u, is the chief town in southern Alsace, near the French and Swiss borders. When it was a French town, before 1871, it was the site of a French military training school and had a strongly fortified castle. When the Germans took it over they continued the school as a training place for cadets. The garrison numbered about twelve thousand.

Eager to recover Alsace, a French army entered that province at Altkirch, seventeen miles west of Basle. That was on Friday the 7th. On Saturday a forced march against Mulhausen, eighteen miles away, was undertaken. The pace and the fighting are said to have been terrific. The final assault on the fortifications was keen but apparently the Germans intended to make their first decided stand at Strassburg. The result was the French occupation of the key to southwest Germany.

EACH FOR ALL, AND ALL FOR EACH.



John Redmond electrified the House last week by saying that the British Government could withdraw every soldier from Ireland, for Nationalists and Unionists would unite to guard her shores. He is seen here leaving Buckingham Palace. On the left is his co-worker, John Dillon, M.P.



FIRST ENGAGEMENT OF THE WAR.

The only serious fighting during the first week of the war (4th to 11th) was in the neighbourhood of Liege. The German advance guard was checked by the Belgians, who fought valiantly. The next battle is expected at Namur, where the French and British are concentrating.

upon events elsewhere. If the other German armies pressing upon the French frontier are not able to find an entrance upon French territory the great bulk of the British and French forces will be thrown into southwestern Belgium. If the German fleet is driven back through the North Sea, under the guns of Wilhelmshaven and Cuxhaven and Heligoland, the German army in the field will be fighting in desperation rather than in confidence, while the British and French will go forward in a spirit of exultation.

The German Colonies

CONSIDERABLE ignorance as to the extent of the German colonies prevails in the English world, yet the German possessions overseas are very extensive. Roughly speaking, their area is equal to one-third of the area of the Dominion of Canada, the official figures being 931,460 square miles. The German possessions occupy a territory nearly as large as the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia combined. The total white population is only a little over twenty-two thousand, but the native population is placed at eleven million.

In Africa, Germany has four fairly large possessions. Togo has 33,700 square miles; Kamerun has 191,130 square miles; German South West Africa has 322,450 square miles; and German East Africa 384,180 square miles. Of course, these possessions are not suitable for residence by people from Northern climates, nevertheless, they are of considerable potential value.

In Asia, the German possessions are smaller, but strategically of greater value. Kia-Chau is a town