

CLASS BRITISH WITH WORLD'S BEST FIGHTERS

Portuguese Observer Grows Enthusiastic in His Praise of Officers and Men Who he Says, Are Splendid Types, Physically and Are Cool and Daring in Battle Even to a Fault

(By DR. CUNHA E. COSTA.)

(The following article by the well-known Portuguese advocate and journalist has been translated from the Lisbon Journal A Nacuo by Albert H. Frisbee.)

IN the hotel at Marseilles where I was awaiting the boat for Portugal were lodged the majority of the superior officers of the British India Expeditionary Force and the military deputation sent by Britain to meet and accompany this army to its ultimate destination in France.

The British campaigning uniform, while a model of everything practical, sacrifices nothing to elegance. The women of Britain have every reason to be proud of the deportment of their men-folk. Tall, refined, carefully groomed, scrupulously clean, closely shaven, with fine manners, perfect even in the crash of battle, the British officers are magnificent examples of a people destined to dominate without oppressing.

The French are the first to pay homage to their steady courage in face of danger; highly trained in all physical exercises, they regard war as a sport. "To hunt the tiger in India or here is, after all, one and the same thing," said one of the British staff officers. These people of such exceptional temperament and bearing play battle. In face, in this respect there is an episode worthy of mention.

Every day, at certain fixed hours, official French bulletins were placed in the hall of the hotel. Victories and reverses were received with the same equanimity and ardently discussed. If by chance the Germans had accomplished an intelligent or audacious movement, the British officers at once put their whole enthusiasm into studying the manoeuvre. If the strategy of the enemy were judged to be good, then it was advisable to take advantage of it, paying the foe back in his own coin, and, if possible, with interest.

Only once during the months of war already passed can I suppose that any Briton worthy of such a name has felt the least perturbation or grief. That was when the German submarines sank the Crossy and her two companions who nobly sacrificed themselves in lending her aid. On that day Britons were stirred, not with fear, but with fury.

I had never heard a Briton admit, nor even refer to the possibility of defeat, although all agree on the possibility or even the probability of serious partial reverses. The British staff officers regard the retreat to the Marne and the subsequent offensive of Joffre as the maximum of military talent, and they warmly give the highest praise to the French Generalissimo.

Our allies were calculating on the siege and fall of Paris, and on a long series of disasters until time should establish the equality of numbers in the opposing force. While the Germans and the rest of the European nations were counting on a campaign of a few months' duration, Great Britain was preparing for a three years' war.

The material and moral greatness of this wonderful nation is astounding.

Few people seriously consider this latter aspect of the problem, which is certainly the more impressive. Can it be supposed that Great Britain is a lover of armament? What an illusion! For Great Britain, war is an instrument of civism which she uses because none other is possible, and only as a last resource.

Fight For Justice.

The Briton, to fight with enthusiasm, must strike with the firm conviction that he is risking his life for freedom and justice. Thus, in intervening in the present conflict, the British people find a kind of spiritual beauty which impels all their best physical and moral energies.

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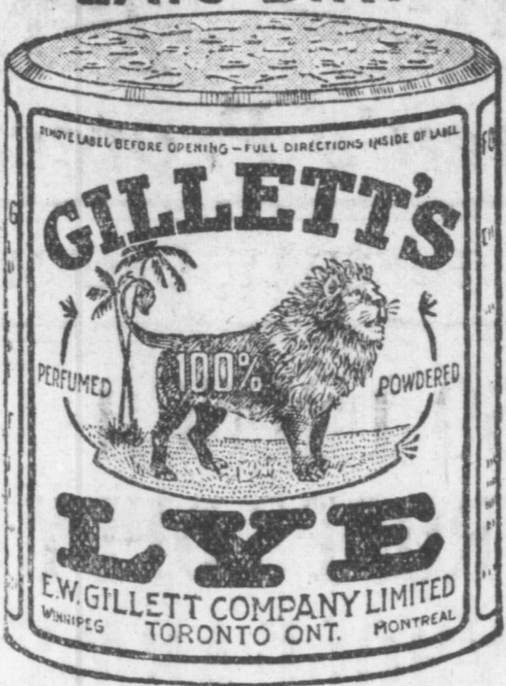
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A month is sufficient to transform him into an infantryman, and, after fifteen days under fire, not in the whole world is there a more intelligent nor valiant soldier. For this reason the French and British fraternise and reciprocally esteem and admire each other. From this perfect understanding humanity will reap a great and lasting benefit when the fields, now sown with shells and shrapnel, be opened once again to the plough, and burst forth into glorious golden harvests.

To fight by the side of Britain is not a favour which we confer, but a great honour done to us.

I have my own national pride, and in no way do I belittle myself in confessing that I am absolutely incapable of imitating any one of the specific virtues of the British citizen, but I can admire them. I would never naturalise myself British nor French. I am Portuguese in the highest acceptance of the word. If, however, I were to be asked if I regretted not having been born in England or France I should frankly confess that I did.

This moral conviction that Great Britain is necessary to the harmony and general equilibrium of the world, not by oppressing it as Germany wishes to do, but, on the contrary, by delivering it from tyranny, constitutes the key to her imperturbable and formidable serenity in face of peril, and the unshakable confidence in final victory.

Not only do the officers hold such convictions, but the private soldiers also. And what profound ignorance that of theaiser respecting British volunteers! There never was a citizen better prepared for war than the British. The ability to resist fatigue, which in other countries requires so much training and preparation, the British volunteer brings with him when he enlists in the ranks.

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