

BELGIUM

small *pâtisserie* for tea. *Madame la patronne*, a bright, talkative little woman, was full of curiosity as to who we were and what business we were about, and when von der Lancken said:

"*Nous venons de visiter votre belle cathédrale;*" the woman replied:

"*Oui, et puisque vous avez détruit la belle cathédrale de Rheims j'espère que vous épargneriez la nôtre!*"

The Baron turned as red as the lining of the white collar of his bluish-grey cape—and we sought the motor.

The road to Lille was a descent into Avernus, with destruction and desolation more and more apparent as we passed on. One could almost mark the frontier between Belgium and France by the changed aspect of the population and the scene; instead of the bustling, gossiping groups, we saw only sad women and bedraggled children and old and hobbling men, but not a strong man or a man in middle years—all were off to the front. It was a depressing sight and I felt a sorrow settle over me that was not lifted during all our stay; it is not lifted yet, nor ever will be. I cannot forget those tragic faces, that expression of humiliation, the degradation of living under a conqueror. We entered Lille toward evening with an aeroplane flying high above us amid the bursting shrapnel with which the Germans were trying to bring it down, and from that moment on we were not once beyond the sound of guns.

Lille is an industrial centre, very much like any one of a dozen small cities in the Middle West. In times of peace it is dingy enough, but then, with life prostrate, empty of men and of all who could get away, and swarming with foreign soldiers, it was beyond words haggard, forlorn, and disreputable; everywhere there was dirt,