

"The Kadaverwertungsanstalt"

THE LISTENING POST was severely criticized at the time for featuring the "HUMAN FAT STORY" that appeared in its 2nd Anniversary Issue. A women's organization in Tooting, S. W. London, sent us a scathing denunciation and stated that we should be boiled in oil for publishing such tommy-rot. We told the Tooting Tea Tasters that they were unpatriotic to wish us to boil in oil while they objected to the enemy not frying in their own fat! The writer, last year, gave the Woodstock Sentinel-Review a story on THE LISTENING POST and that part appertaining to the Corpse Utilization plant is re-printed from the article as published.

"In April, May and June, 1917, many journals commented upon the human fat factory story that had been printed originally in the Daily Express. Although many unkind things had been said about the huns, they seemed to resent this piece of propaganda as the last insult. To us it was not regarded as propaganda—The Listening Post was fooled just as completely as the Germans. The Daily Express first printed the story and published a photo showing dead Germans wired together upon a railway flat-car and being shipped to the corpse utilization factory for the fats and other valuable chemicals that they should contain. The "Times" printed the story but was fair enough to say that the German word "Kadaver" in Kadaverwertungsanstalt meant more of an animal body instead of a human corpse. We in the trenches took the Daily Express tale with a grain of salt as it had the habit of being first to print the news and first to deny it; but the "Thunderer" was more stable and exacting. It seldom got excited, therefore, when it printed the story it was regarded as gospel truth and accepted by all the Canadian soldiery as an absolute fact! A feeling of revulsion swept through the civilized world and the question was asked in parliament if the story was true. Either Asquith or Lloyd George replied, that they were not concerned over what was going on in Germany. Another member remarked that he had reached the stage, that he could believe anything said about the enemy. Mothers with sons that had been reported missing, appealed for the truth, with letters full of anguish to the public press. The chief of the propaganda bureau denied that his department had started the story or even sanctioned its appearance in the public press. Moreover, he thought that the story was genuine because it had appeared in the semi-official Berlin Lokalanzeiger and he produced the paper.

The French Propaganda Bureau then took hold of the story and with typical "French style" added a few more gruesome details, that lead one to believe that the Germans had torn some leaf out of a book describing a tour through a modern Chicago meat packing plant; but they were using human bodies instead of cattle. Anyway, I have

described how genuine the story appeared to the average front line soldier and its genuiness was swallowed hook, line and sinker by all of us.

Rude and crude jokes were levelled at our fellow comrades, that possessed rotund waistlines! They were immediately nick-named "leaf lard" or "tallow candle." The best one of all was securing a chap's fibre identification disc unbeknownst to him, then sweating off the label of a can of boiled dinner and slitting a hole in the side of it to insert his disc. The label was then re-pasted on and it was seen that the chap received the doctored can. It is needless to write, that when the fellow prodded into his own identity disc about halfway through the meal, that he lost his appetite for the day.

As far as the Listening Post was concerned the corps utilization plant was too good of a story to let slip by. The paper never regarded the truth as essential. Even if the story wasn't true it was a splendid idea. We liked the thought that the highly trained German military machine was "good to the last," therefore, we played the story up. The censor balked at the articles as against common decency and respect for the fallen foe. We balked too. We pointed out that he was to censor the articles that might prove valuable to the enemy and our dope was a reprint from the Lokalanzeiger, naturally, from such a reliable source the Germans were well aware of the fact.

We were in billets at Bully Grenay. News Editor J. W. Campbell came over to our "bivvy" to request as much "dope" as possible for the forthcoming issue of the second anniversary number. Just after the battle of Vimy Ridge, our staff had been seriously depleted. Some had gone west, others were wounded and in the hospital. We hunted up Hugh Farmer, the cartoonist, and hied ourselves to the nearest estaminet to heighten our imagination. At that time the British Isles were placarded with Bovril advertising, depicting a bull smelling a bottle of Bovril. The caption underneath read "ALAS, MY POOR BROTHER!" We aped the bovril advertisement with a cartoon but substituted the German soldiery instead of the bull. Several tales were written to bear out the idea but Campbell said that the Editor would not pass it. Eventually, we squeezed in a couple of the mild ones. For this special "20 Years Apres la Gurre Finie" number we reproduce the cartoon (last page) and a couple of items that conveyed to the soldiers that if they got captured that they would be boiled in their own fat.

REMARKABLE DOCUMENT

EDITOR'S NOTE—The following extraordinary fragment of Regimental Orders was found in the possession of one of a group of German prisoners,