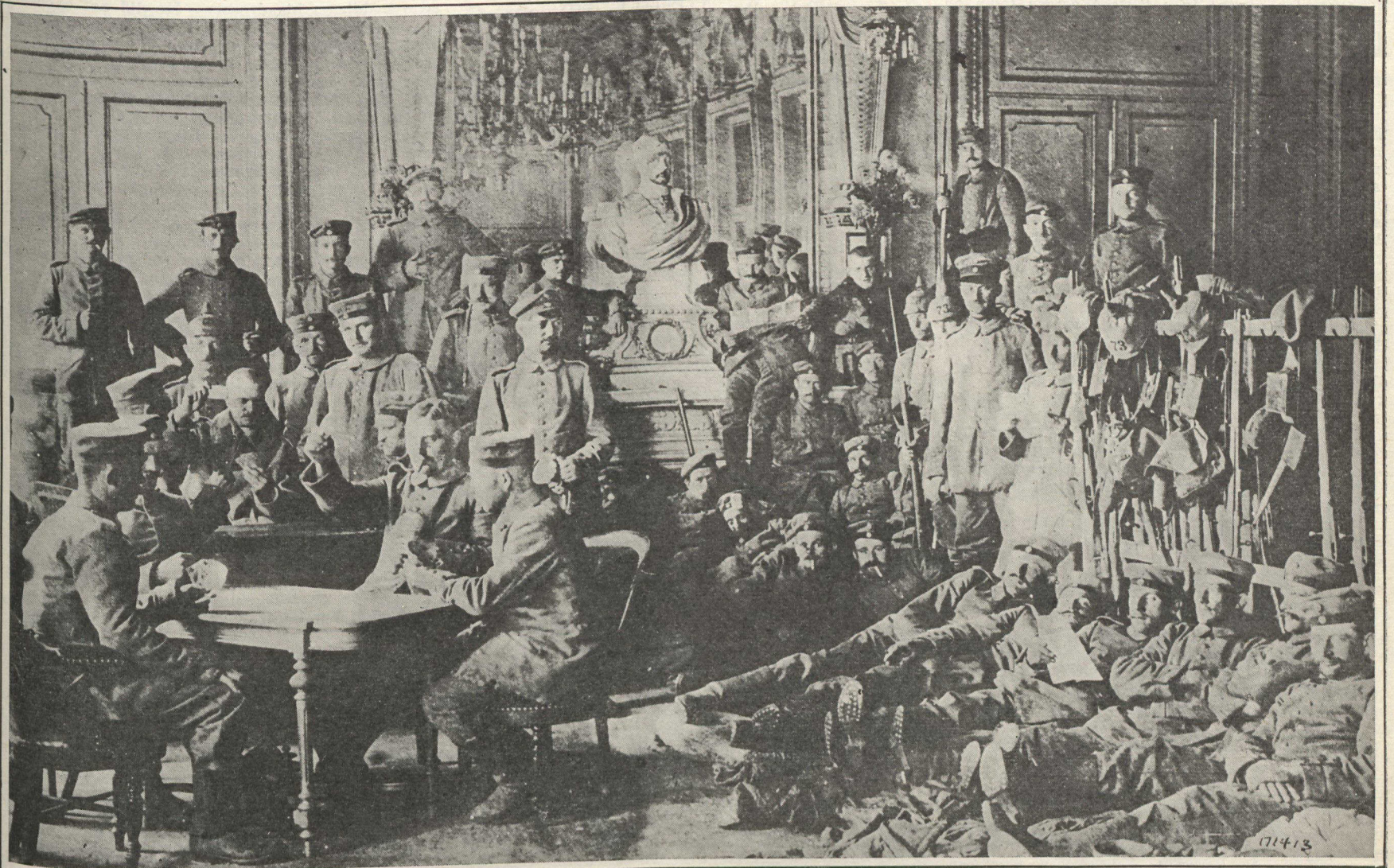


# German Soldiers Very Much at Home

*The Kaiser's Warriors are Quite Accommodating and Informal*



Before the war this was a fine old Belgian Ball-Room. But the hob-nailed jackboots of the Germans played hob with the waxed floors.

EVERYWHERE the German soldiers go they make themselves peculiarly at home. In palace or castle, private drawing-room, cottage or wine-cellar they proceed on the maxim "To the Victor belong the Spoils." This is probably justifiable warfare from the German point of view. It was sanctioned to some extent by Napoleon, who, however, never permitted works of art to be destroyed, though he made every state his armies entered contribute to the support of the army.

The fourth official report issued by the Belgian Legation who have recently been abroad telling their story to other nations, contains some striking examples of how German officers and soldiers treat property belonging to the vanquished. One section deals particularly with operations in private houses. The Counsellor of the Legation makes various accusations. Furniture he says he found smashed, doors broken down, wallpaper torn from the walls. Doors of cellars were broken open; cupboards and drawers emptied; linen scattered on the floors among shoals of empty bottles. In the houses of well-to-do people oil paintings were found slashed and statues broken. In one which was decorated with a ferocious German legend, the commissioner found hundreds of empty and broken bottles in the hallways, on the staircase, and in the yard. The smell of spilt wine was everywhere.

He alleges that he walked on a chaos of torn clothes, pieces of wool torn from mattresses—and still more empty bottles. The drawing-room was full of bottles; dozens of wine-glasses covered the tables and sideboards. Armchairs and sofas were tattered and torn. In one corner a piano with a wine-stained keyboard seemed to have been battered by jackboots. One can fancy some drunken officer with a musical turn sitting at the piano hanging out "Die Wacht am Rhein." All property that could not be taken



Here we have the German version of that good old song, "In Cellar Cool," as sung by German soldiers down among the wine casks of the enemy.

away by refugees, he says, was either appropriated or destroyed. Family jewels, silver plate and money were all taken. The officers occupied the houses of the wealthy. The soldiers were permitted to pillage at will among homes of humbler citizens.

The report on the treatment of churches is quite as vividly graphic. The church at Aerschot is particularly described. The three doors, as well as that of the sacristy, were all consumed by fire. Altars, confessionals, harmoniums and candelabra were broken. Collection boxes were forced open. Wooden Gothic statues, which decorated the pillars, were torn down and destroyed by fire.

Most of this destruction seems to have been part of a premeditated programme. It must be inferred, however, that what happened after the wine bottles were opened was more or less spontaneous. German soldiers have no objection to drinking French and Belgian wine, even though they may prefer the wines of the Rhine. On the body of one German soldier was found a pathetic order written in bad French for use when he got to some good Paris cafe; ordering chickens and wine—which he never got.

While most troops when occupying a town are tempted to pillage and loot, it is certain that British soldiers so far have committed no deeds of this kind. Everywhere they went they have been treated with kindness. At many places the women have freely dispensed wine to the soldiers—when permitted so to do. Whenever the allied troops get into Germany, there may be more provocation to plunder and pillage. But the message of Lord Kitchener, pasted in every British soldier's knapsack, is by now pretty well committed to heart. It especially advises against loot, drunkenness and deeds of violence. Besides, most British soldiers are less fond of Rhine wine than German soldiers are fond of the light wines of France and Belgium.