

Demolition is Probable Fate

Rheims Cathedral on Verge of Total Destruction

Restoration Impossible

Eternal Monument to Savagery—Priceless Treasures Lost—Brave Cardinal Remains

Paris, May 14.—I have just visited Rheims in company with Whitney Warren, who was invited by the French government to make a new report on the condition of the cathedral in view of the recent terrific bombardment. This is the third time that the American architect has been called upon to give his professional study to the systematic destruction of the building.

In as much as entrance is now barred to everyone on account of the danger of falling debris, I was especially included in the official permit by General Neville. For three hours we wandered undisturbed and unaccompanied through the magnificent ruin, taking dozens of photographs. Mr. Warren making minute comparisons of the present condition with that of the time of his last visit, six months ago. In summing up his findings, he said:

"The cathedral is now in grave danger of total destruction. In the recent bombardment, seven of the flying buttresses were shot away, so that the walls, particularly those of the transept, are so weak that just one chance shot would bring all that portion of the building tumbling down. The walls are full of cracks and are really just hanging together, depending only on the thin iron supports, inserted through the masonry. Considering the entire cathedral, I would say that three chance shots, or possibly half a dozen, would raise it to the ground.

Can Never Be Restored

"With the loss of the flying buttresses, the pressure on the other supports

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has become so great against the outer walls that they are bulging out. New cracks are appearing constantly so that the vicinity of the cathedral is very unsafe. It could be saved if no more shells hit it. I don't mean it could be restored. It is too badly smashed ever to be restored, except in spots. What I mean is it could be preserved as it is—a wonderful and inspiring ruin, quite as magnificent in its way as the Roman Colosseum. No matter what further destruction occurs it seems to me it should be kept simply as a ruin to let the world see throughout all time what savagery the Germans really are. Even to preserve it would be a difficult task, but nowadays it is possible to preserve almost anything, and I believe a temporary support could be installed, both inside and outside the walls, that would prevent them falling until they could be sufficiently strengthened and again made intact. However, the Germans are probably able to prevent the building being saved, as they seem intent on its total destruction.

"Since I was here the last time I

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should say its condition is over 90 per cent. worse. The whole exterior is now too badly scarred for any modern restoration to make anything of it. The magnificent hautes-reliefs of the fourteenth century, that covered one entire interior end wall, are by some miracle, still all intact. They are now, however, as they are carved out of the cathedral itself. I am glad to see the authorities are now busy above the tower's wall covering them, but inasmuch as the Germans have lately been sending shells of 280-millimetres into the building, it will be more than a miracle if they escape.

German Excuses False

"Of course it is simple to see that the German statement that the cathedral has been shelled because it is used as an observation post is only another of their lies. The cathedral towers are about eighty metres high, and you can count about sixteen French observation balloons hereabouts that are at least three hundred metres high. What good would the towers be as an observation post when they say that the shells hitting the cathedral have been accidental, and that they did not really mean to destroy it, because, as you can so easily see on approaching Rheims in the distance, the cathedral looms above the town's big German are ruthlessly destroying this great work of art because they are what they are—that is to say, because they are Germans, just Germans. There is no name to call anyone that could be worse."

"The interior of the cathedral is now so bad that it is impossible to keep the rubbish cleared, as was the case up to a month ago, when visitors were constantly taken there. Then there was only one hole in the roof, but now there is a succession of great holes and fissures joining them, so that the floor is in places five feet deep with crumbled masonry. The high altar has totally disappeared and the priceless stained glass of the windows has now all gone.

"The greatest miracle of all is that the building has resisted destruction so long," Mr. Warren explained. "It is only the great thickness of the walls and the stone arches of the roof that have saved it from falling long ago.

Spite Bombardment

During the period of the war preceding the great Allied offensive April, it

out a great change from a few months ago. Like Verdun and Arras, the place is gradually disintegrating, falling into final ruin. Up to the last bombardment, about 17,000 of the 120,000 inhabitants of before the war remained there, but then about 10,000 more were evacuated, leaving 7,000 as the present population. The famous hotel, Lion d'Or, in the square facing the cathedral, which had kept open throughout, was finally compelled to close its doors, and the carriage which has become famous for the pertinacity of their drivers in remaining to conduct sightseers through the town were also compelled to quit. But even during the beginning of the final heavy shelling, they held on. When one side of the street was getting shelled, the entire line of vehicles took their stand on the opposite side, a little further along, where there was comparative safety, and often artillery officers brought up from various points would leave their military automobiles at division headquarters, installed in one of the famous champagne cellars, and calmly hire a carriage to drive them out to the batteries.

\$140,000,000 in Champagne.

Speaking of champagne cellars, an officer at headquarters told me that the inhabitants are counting on the vintage now bottled in the city to restore the city after the war. He said that there are 80,000,000 bottles, at a present valuation of \$140,000,000. It is proposed that, instead of selling this labelled by the year, that for sentimental reasons it be called "The War Brand," and that the entire output be disposed of under such a label as the authentic champagne of Rheims that resisted the German.

Our drive through the city showed scarcely a single house that has escaped



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at least partial destruction, and whole districts wiped out entirely. The Hotel de Ville is a complete wreck. There is nothing standing, but fragments of the outer walls. This destruction was also part of the last bombardment. At the end of the tour, we returned to the Place de la Cathedrale, and turned off into the Rue du Cardinal de Lorraine, where in an old palace adjoining the cathedral gardens there still lives Mgr. Lucon, cardinal of Rheims. He is eighty-two years of age, and except for a trip to attend the conclave that elected the present Pope, he has not passed a day away from his beloved cathedral since the beginning of the war. Although half his palace is in ruins—that sixteen times during the last bombardment—we were received with all the

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Denton, Texas.—"After my little girl was born two years ago I began suffering with female trouble and could hardly do my work. I was very nervous but just kept dragging on until last summer when I got where I could not do my work. I would have a chill every day and hot flashes and dizzy spells and my head would ache and life was a burden to me until one day my husband's step-sister told my husband he had used some of her medicine. So he got Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound for me, and after taking the first three doses I began to improve. I continued its use, and have never had any female trouble since." Mrs. G. O. LOWMEYER, 419 W. Monterey Street, Denton, Texas.

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