

GERMAN ATROCITIES

Why should the women of Canada vote for the return of the Union Government? Because they are vitally interested in seeing that the war against Germany and all that Germany represents is carried on to the bitter end. Germany's triumph would mean the destruction of all the rights and privileges that the women of the world have won. Germany's attitude to women is that of the uncivilized savage. It is doubtful if the hordes of the Huns when centuries ago they swept over Europe treated the women of conquered nations as brutally, as inhumanly or as fiendishly as did the Germans the women of Belgium in their invasion of that country.

No woman can read the report of the Commission, headed by Lord Bryce, which investigated the German atrocities in Belgium, without a shudder of horror. Lustful and cruel, they violated women and girls, murdered their husbands, tortured and mutilated children, and murdered babies. The story of the Bryce report, all of which is absolutely authenticated, is alone enough to decide every woman in Canada to stand by a government which proposes to war to the bitter end for the defeat of such a civilization. The Union Government is at war for the protection of the women of Canada, and believes that the Canadian army which is carrying on this war should be amply reinforced and maintained.

Proven by Direct Evidence

The Commission comes to the following definite conclusions which it states are proven by direct evidence beyond a shadow of a doubt:

It is proved—

- (i) That there were in many parts of Belgium deliberate and systematically organized massacres of the civil population, accompanied by many isolated murders and other outrages.
- (ii) That in the conduct of the war generally innocent civilians, both men and women, were murdered in large numbers, women violated, and children murdered.

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- (iii) That looting, house burning, and the wanton destruction of property were ordered and countenanced by the officers of the German Army; that elaborate provision had been made for systematic incendiaryism at the very outbreak of the war, and that the burnings and destruction were frequent where no military necessity could be alleged, being indeed part of a system of general terrorization.
- (iv) That the rules and usages of war were frequently broken, particularly by the using of civilians, including women and children, as a shield for advancing forces exposed to fire, to a less degree by killing the wounded and prisoners, and in the frequent abuse of the Red Cross and the White Flag.

Dealing with the massacre of non-combatants the report of the committee says:—

In the present war—and this is the gravest charge against the German army—the evidence shows that the killing of non-combatants was carried out to an extent for which no previous war between nations claiming to be civilised (for such cases as the atrocities perpetrated by the Turks on the Bulgarian Christians in 1876, and on the Armenian Christians in 1895 and 1896, do not belong to that category) furnishes any precedent. That this killing was done as part of a deliberate plan is clear from the facts hereinbefore set forth regarding Louvain, Aerschot, Dinant, and other towns. The killing was done under orders in each place. It began at a certain fixed date, and stopped (with some few exceptions) at another fixed date. Some of the officers who carried out the work did it reluctantly, and said they were obeying directions from their chiefs. The same remarks apply to the destruction of property. House burning was part of the programme; and villages, even large parts of a city, were given to the flames as part of the terrorising policy."

Treatment of Women

The treatment of women was most diabolical in character. In Aerschot, women and children were herded into a church which had frequently been used as a stable, detained for 48 hours without food other than coarse bread, and denied the common decencies of life.

"At Dinant 60 women and children were confined in the cellar of a convent from Sunday morning till the following Friday (August 28th), sleeping on the ground, for there were no beds, with nothing to drink during the whole period, and given no food until the Wednesday, "when somebody threw into the cellar two sticks of macaroni and a carrot for each prisoner." In other cases the women and children were marched for long distances along roads (e.g., march of women from Louvain to Tirlemont, 28th August), the laggards pricked on by the attendant Uhlans. A lady complains of having been brutally kicked by privates. Others were struck with the butt end of rifles. At Louvain, at Liège, at Aerschot, at Malines, at Montigny, at Andenne, and elsewhere, there is evidence that the troops were not restrained from drunkenness, and drunken soldiers cannot be trusted to observe the rules or decencies of war, least of all when they are called upon to execute a pre-ordained plan of arson and pillage. From the very first women were not safe. At Liège women and children were chased about the streets by soldiers. A witness gives a story, very circumstantial in its details, of how women were publicly raped in the market-

place of the city, five young German officers assisting. At Aerschot men and women were deliberately shot when coming out of burning houses. At Liège, Louvain, Sempst, and Malines women were burned to death, either because they were surprised and stupefied by the fumes of the conflagration, or because they were prevented from escaping by German soldiers. Witnesses recount how a great crowd of men, women, and children from Aerschot were marched to Louvain, and then suddenly exposed to a fire from a mitrailleuse and rifles. "We were all placed," recounts a sufferer, "in Station Street, Louvain, and the German soldiers fired on us. I saw the corpses of some women in the street. I fell down, and a woman who had been shot fell on top of me."

Fiendish Slaughter of Children

Here is the evidence of a Belgian Post Office official, giving a story of fiendish slaughter of children. He says (page 137 of the evidence):

"Before the war I lived at Malines. I was taken prisoner by the German soldiers early in September. They compelled me to march (with other refugees) with the troops.

"In passing through a village near Sempst, the name of which I do not know, I saw several old men (Belgian civilians) beside the road wounded. I saw a private German soldier go up to one of these wounded old men (he was bleeding in the face) and strike him in the back with the butt end of his rifle. He fell down and was struck heavily again several times whilst on the ground. I believe he was killed.

"He had given no sort of provocation. Several other civilians were struck at the same time by the Germans, but I did not think seriously hurt. There were non-commissioned officers present, but I think no commissioned officer.

"In the same village I saw two little children (girls), three or four years old, standing beside the road with a woman who appeared to be their mother. As the Germans came up, two of them drove their bayonets through the bodies of these two children, killing them.

"Close beside the road there was a small farm homestead burning and the bodies of the two children were pitched into the flames by the soldiers who killed them; they tossed them in with their bayonets. It was a different soldier who killed each child. The same thing was done by each, one killing one child and one the other. I saw no commissioned officer present. The mother was crying—the soldiers pushing her away. I did not think she was hurt. Other people saw this happen, but they are strangers to me and I cannot give their names. This village was about half an hour's walk from Sempst—on the east of it."

There are pages and pages of such revolting evidence.

Here is the well authenticated evidence of a married woman, a Belgian refugee:

"My husband and I were at the outbreak of the war between Germany and Belgium keeping a small shop at Tamines. My husband also worked as a labourer.

"Our house is situated on the village green at Tamines, and commands an uninterrupted view of the same.

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"Tamines was occupied by the Germans in the first fortnight in August, 1914. On or about the 15th or 16th August I saw a German soldier kill a little Belgian boy of about 15 years of age who was walking on the aforesaid green. The little boy was killed by a rifle bullet. As far as I could see the boy was doing no harm to any one. I do not know the boy's name.

"On some date between the 15th and 20th August I saw about 20 German soldiers, together with an officer, on the aforesaid green. A little girl and her two little brothers came and looked at the said soldiers. I then saw these soldiers kill her and her two little brothers. The girl was killed by being shot through the ear. These three children, whose ages were 8, 12, and 15, were no relations of mine or my husband, but they were well known to me as inhabitants of Tamines.

"At about the same date referred to in the preceding paragraph of this my declaration, I saw German soldiers force an old man of about 70 years of age, who was well known to me, to assist them to lift up certain wounded German soldiers. When he had finished this work he was shot and killed by the soldiers."

"On one occasion children were even roped together and used as a military screen against the enemy, on another three soldiers went into action carrying small children to protect themselves from flank fire. A shocking case of the murder of a baby by a drunken soldier at Malines is thus recorded by one eye-witness and confirmed by another:—

"One day when the Germans were not actually bombarding the town I left my house to go to my mother's house in High Street. My husband was with me. I saw eight German soldiers, and they were drunk. They were singing and making a lot of noise and dancing about. As the German soldiers came along the street I saw a small child, whether boy or girl I could not see, come out of a house. The child was about two years of age. The child came into the middle of the street so as to be in the way of the soldiers. The soldiers were walking in twos. The first line of two passed the child; one of the second line, the man on the left, stepped aside and drove his bayonet with both hands into the child's stomach, lifting the child into the air on his bayonet and carrying it away on his bayonet, he and his comrades still singing. The child screamed when the soldier struck it with his bayonet, but not afterwards."

The evidence of the violation of women is too shocking to print. The Commission in summing up, says:

"The cases of violation, sometimes under threat of death, are numerous and clearly proved. They were often accompanied by cruelty, and the slaughter of women after violation is more than once credibly attested."

It is to save the women of Canada from such horrors that the army of the Dominion is fighting in Flanders, and for the same reason the Union Government proposes to properly reinforce that army.