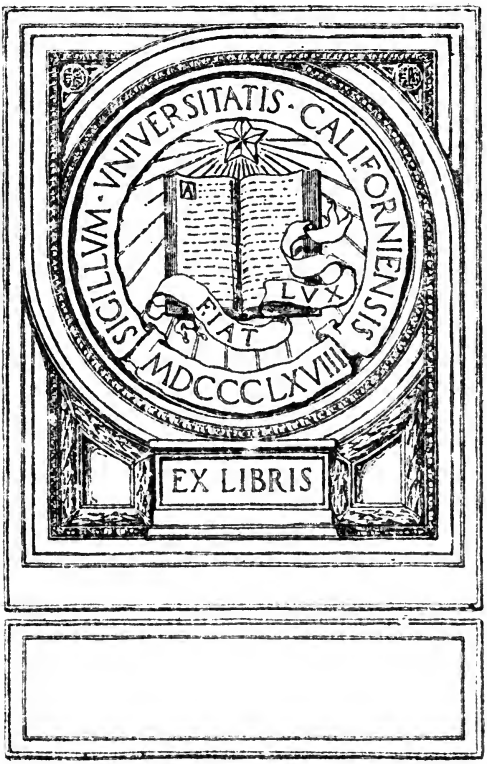
THE GERMAN FURY IN BELGIUM

BY L. MOKVELD

WITH A PREFACE BY JOHN BUCHAN



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EXPERIENCES OF A NETHERLAND JOURNALIST DURING FOUR MONTHS WITH THE GERMAN ARMY IN BELGIUM

BY

L. MOKVELD

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WITH A PREFACE BY

JOHN BUCHAN

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PREFACE

AMONG the many books published on the behaviour of the German Army in Belgium, this account by a distinguished Dutch journalist must occupy a unique place. It is written by a neutral, who held, at the start, no brief for either side. It is written by an eye-witness, who chronicles not what he heard, but what he saw. It is written also by one who mingled with the German troops and was present at the inception of the whole compaign of outrage. Mr. Mokveld took his life in his hands when, with great courage and devotion, he visited Visé and Liège and Louvain at the most critical moments. His character of neutral journalist was only a flimsy protection among the drunken and excited German troops. But his boldness was justified, for after many adventures he came safely through, and he was enabled in those early weeks to see the whole of Belgium from Liège to the Yser and from Antwerp to Dinant. The result is an admirable piece of war-correspondence, which bears on every page the proofs of shrewd observation and a sincere love of truth and honest dealing.

There is much in Mr. Mokveld's narrative to interest the historian. For example, he gives a fuller account than we have yet had of that obscure period when Liège had fallen, but its northern forts

were still holding out. But it is less a history of the campaign than a chronicle of those lesser incidents of war which reveal the character of the combatants. No more crushing indictment of German methods has been issued, the more crushing since it is so fair and reasonable. The author has very readily set down on the credit side any act of German humanity or courtesy which he witnessed or heard of. But the credit side is meagre and the black list of crimes portentous. Episodes like the burning of Visé and the treatment of British prisoners in the train at Landen would be hard to match in history for squalid horror.

Two facts are made clear by Mr. Mokveld's book, if, indeed, the world has ever doubted them. The first is that the German authorities, believing their victory to be beyond question, deliberately sanctioned a campaign of frightfulness. They did not imagine that they would ever be held to account. They wished to terrorise their opponents by showing them what resistance involved. The atrocities were not the blunders of drink-sodden reservists, but the result of the theories of half-witted military pedants. The second is that the invading armies were as nervous as a hysterical woman. Those would-be conquerors of the world were frightened by their own shadows. A shot fired by accident from a German rifle led to tales of attacks by Belgian *francs-tireurs* and then to indiscriminate murder by way of revenge. Mr. Mokveld examined the legends of treacherous Belgian assaults and the mutilation of the German wounded, and found them in every case wholly baseless. No German

had ever seen these things happen, but had only heard of them. When definite details were given, Mr. Mokveld tracked them down and found them false. The Belgian atrocities lacked even that slender justification which belongs to reprisals. They were the work of a drunken and "rattled" soldiery— for fear is apt to make men brutal— deliberately encouraged by the authorities, who for this purpose relaxed the bonds of military discipline. When the battle of the Marne changed the complexion of affairs, these authorities grew scared and repudiated the policy, but Belgium remains a witness of what Germany's triumph means for her victims.

JOHN BUCHAN.

INTRODUCTION

A FEW words by way of introduction.

I had wished to publish this book a long time ago, because I think it my duty to submit to the opinion of the public the things which I witnessed in the unfortunate land of the Belgians, and where I was present at such important events as an impartial spectator. I call myself an impartial spectator, for if this book be anti-German, it should not be forgotten that the facts give it that tendency.

That the book was not published sooner is because I could not foresee more than others how terribly long the war would last; and I should have preferred to wait till the end in order to insert several reports which I know are being kept in the occupied part, in order to acquaint the whole world with the full truth about the behaviour of the Germans. As long as the Germans keep the upper hand in Belgium, such a publication cannot take place without danger to several persons.

But because the German libels go on accusing the Belgium people of horrible francs-tireurs acts, I have thought that I ought not to wait any longer before giving my evidence to the public.

This book does not attempt to give more than evidence of the truth. It does not claim to have literary distinction; I have not even tried to give it that stamp. By relating various events succes-

sively witnessed, which have no mutual connection, this would be very difficult.

My stories are not exaggerated or touched up, but are true to reality. That is the reason why the German authorities have driven me away from Belgium, and tried to get hold of me to punish me. On that side they are afraid that the truth be known.

A long time after I had left Belgium I got hold of the Black List, in which I am mentioned twice over among eighty-seven other persons; once as Hokveld-Journalist and again as Mokveld-Correspondent. The list was published by me in *De Tijd* of June 2nd, 1915.

That I was "wanted" is proved by the fact that two persons have had the greatest trouble because they were mistaken for the Mokveld-Correspondent of *De Tijd.* My colleague Kemper passed a fortnight in prison in Brussels, accused of having written various articles in *De Tijd,* which were written by me, and I relate, in the chapter "Round about Bilsen," what Mr. Van Wersch, another Netherlander, suffered for the same reason.

But although the Germans are afraid to let the truth be known, there is no reason why I should withhold my evidence. On the contrary, I will try to do everything I can to make public opinion do justice to the unfortunate Belgians, trodden down and insulted, falsely and vilely libelled by their oppressors, and accused of offences of which they never were guilty.

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CHAPTER I

ON THE WAY TO LIÈGE

WHEN *De Tijd* sent me to Belgium as its correspondent, I had not the faintest notion practically how to perform my duties, for the simple reason that I could not apprehend at all how a modern war might be conducted. But I was destined to receive my first impressions when still on Netherland[1] territory and after my arrival at Maastricht.

On the hot afternoon of August 7th, 1914, the much-delayed train rumbled into the station at Maastricht. A dense mass stood in front of the building. Men, women, and children were crowded there and pushed each other weeping, shouting, and questioning. Families and friends tried to find each other, and many of the folk of Maastricht assisted the poor creatures, who, nervously excited, wept and wailed

[1] The translator uses the words "The Netherlands, Netherlander," and "Netherland" on purpose. The Germans call themselves "Deutsch," the Americans call them "Dutch," the Flemish use "Duts" or "Duuts," and the Netherlanders "Duitsch"; so it is desirable to exchange "Dutch" for "Netherland."

for a father, for wife and children lost in the crowd. It was painful, pitiful, this sight of hundreds of fugitives, who, although now safe, constantly feared that death was near, and anxiously clutched small parcels, which for the most part contained worthless trifles hurriedly snatched up when they fled.

And over these nervous and terrified thousands at Maastricht rolled from afar the dull roar of the guns, thunder-like bursts from which had frightened them so terribly.

The streets leading to the bridge over the Meuse and into the town were also densely thronged with refugees. Here and there large groups listened to the stories told, with profusion of tears, of sufferings inflicted, depicted in far harsher colours than could have been possible. But the wretched creatures exaggerated unconsciously; in their affrighted state they had seen things that had never occurred.

Suddenly every one in the Vrijthof ran in the same direction. I waited calmly, and saw pass by a tragically long train of hooded carts and other peasants' conveyances. The drivers walked by the side of the horses, the Red Cross flag flew from the carriages, fresh clean straw covered their floor, on which wounded soldiers writhed in excruciating pain. The crowd did not press nearer, but, standing silently in long rows, let the sad procession pass by. Such were the first impressions of the war got in these days; nobody uttered a sound, but many stealthily brushed a tear away.

Thus it went on all day long: motors and other conveyances travelled to and fro between the battle-fields and hospitals at Maastricht; fugitives moved

about in streets and squares, upsetting each other more and more by fantastic stories.

As dusk came on nearly the whole population of Maastricht, with all their temporary guests, formed an endless procession and went to invoke God's mercy by the Virgin Mary's intercession. They went to Our Lady's Church, in which stands the miraculous statue of Sancta Maria Stella Maris. The procession filled all the principal streets and squares of the town. I took my stand at the corner of the Vrijthof, where all marched past me, men, women, and children, all praying aloud, with loud voices beseeching: "Our Lady, Star of the Sea, pray for us . . . pray for us . . . pray for us . . . !"

At the same time bells rang . . . and guns roared.

Group after group went by, and I heard French and Netherland, the Maastricht vernacular and sweet Flemish spoken, all sorts of tongues and modes of utterance. The men were bare-headed, and each let his rosary slip through his fingers. Soon after the head of the procession reached Our Lady Square the huge church was packed, and those who could not find room inside stood in the square, which also very soon was full with these thousands of people in a dense mass, like so many blades of grass in a meadow.

However large the crowd, it was silent as death when the priest Jacobs addressed them. He spoke words of encouragement, hope, and confidence, and urged them to send up their prayers to God Almighty—prayers for peace. When he had ended, these thousands sang the "Hymn to Mary," in such perfect order as if only one superhuman body sent

forth an immensely powerful sound from earth to Heaven.

As I was listening to that hymn the storms in my heart subsided—storms raised by so many scenes witnessed during the day; but as soon as the sonorous voices were still, I heard again the dull boom . . . boom . . . boom . . . of the guns. That dire reality! . . .

. . . . .

The next morning I got up early, having been unable to sleep. I realised already that my task was difficult, dangerous, and full of responsibility, for I had to find out and communicate to the public the truth about events, which would be related as beautiful or horrid, according to the interests of my informants. It was dangerous, because I might meet with the same fate that seemed to have been inflicted on so many civilians already.

Dressed in my sporting attire, and carrying some necessaries in a knapsack, I started early, going towards Visé along the canal. As I came to the Netherland boundary-stone and noticed that of Belgium, I had a moment of doubt, but it lasted for a second only. In order to divert my thoughts I walked somewhat more briskly, but was stopped suddenly on Belgian ground by a custom-house officer. I was astonished to see that official there still, for the Germans must be quite near and—as I had been told—small patrols had advanced frequently to this point. My papers were found to be in order, and the man seemed very happy to meet a journalist.

"It is a pity, sir, that you did not arrive a day

sooner, then you might have witnessed great barbarity of the Germans. If you walk on a little farther along the canal, you will see three persons hanging from a tree near Haccourt; one of these is a boy of fourteen. Nobody was allowed on the road, and as a patrol met these three persons, they concluded immediately that they were francs-tireurs, strung them up on the tree, without a trial of any sort, and in addition shot each a bullet through the head. To-day another patrol arrived and had the effrontery to tell the members of the Maastricht Red Cross that the boy had murdered a captain. And we are not allowed to remove the corpses. Horrible! . . . horrible!"

"Yes," I reply, "it is bad, very bad, but is it really all true?"

"True? True, sir? You go and look for yourself! And let me tell you one thing—there are no francs-tireurs here! We know quite well what we may do and what not, and only a moment ago I received a message from the Minister of the Interior, saying that non-combatants who shoot at the enemy expose themselves to danger and their fellow-citizens to retaliations."

I asked him how things were farther on along the Meuse, but he knew nothing. He was stationed here, he said, and was going to stay as long as possible. As soon as the Germans arrived, most people fled, and those who had stayed on were no longer allowed to leave. So he lacked all information, and only understood that fierce fighting was going on, as was confirmed by the incessant thunder of the guns. Fort Pontisse was, moreover, not so very far

away, and frequently we could distinctly tell, by their whistling sound, in which direction the shells flew.

After a few encouraging words I walked on along the solitary, deserted road, leaving the canal on the right, until a by-way took me to the bank of the Meuse, opposite the Netherland frontier village Eysden. I entered a deserted inn. After shouting for a long time, the inn-keeper appeared, looked shyly at me, remaining constantly close by the door of his room. His attitude showed that he was prepared to fly at the slightest suspicious movement on my part; but as soon as I had convinced him that I was a Netherland journalist, he became more friendly, and called his wife and daughters, so that I might tell them all I knew. They were very desirous to know how the war went . . . in the Netherlands, and whether we were fighting the Germans or the English? It was very difficult to make them understand that they were under a misapprehension, but when I had at last succeeded in this, I started in my turn to ask them what they thought of my intention to go farther.

"Go farther, sir? But . . . but . . . sir, don't do that! The Germans shoot every civilian whom they set eyes on."

"Oh, go on!" I answered. "I don't think that I need fear anything of the kind. I am in any case a Netherlander!"

"Netherlander or not, it does not matter. Whosoever one be, every civilian is shot down by them."

"Are they at a great distance from here?"

"Not at all! If you step outside, you can see

them standing, ten minutes from here. Near Lixhe they threw a bridge across the Meuse. It is the third already which they put down, for each time they are smashed from the fort. Oh, it is horrible; there must surely fall a number of dead, and here we have seen corpses in the Meuse already. . . . But I do not understand how you ventured to come here. . . ."

Well, I did not quite fancy the prospect of being shot like a dog, and as I had not yet come into touch with the Germans, it was difficult to say whether these people exaggerated or not. But just opposite was Eysden, and I made up my mind to go there for further information.

Netherland soldiers and inhabitants of the village bustled about along the opposite river-bank. I shouted as loudly as possible; and when at last I succeeded in drawing their attention, I made them understand that I wanted to be pulled across in the little boat, which in ordinary times served as a ferry. A short consultation took place now on the opposite side, after which a soldier, who clearly possessed a strong voice, came as near as possible to the waterside and, making a trumpet of his two hands, roared:

"Not allowed!"

"Why not?"

"We are neutrals!"

"So am I; I am a Netherlander!"

"Possibly! Not allowed!"

And at the same moment he turned round and joined the others.

So I was left there. The Netherlanders refused

to pull me across in consequence of an exaggerated fear of violating their neutrality; the Germans in front of me intended, it was said, to shoot me down as soon as I ventured to get near. But to retrace my steps . . . that is a thing I had never done yet. For a few moments I stood there undecided, but then made up my mind to see what was going to happen, and went on, in spite of the warnings of the kind-hearted innkeeper and his family, who called out to me to return.

The terrible thunder of the guns, of both besiegers and besieged, vibrated through the air. In the distance I noticed a couple of men, probably German soldiers, but a pontoon-bridge was nowhere to be seen. After a few minutes, however, I reached a spot where the Meuse makes a short curve, and had scarcely walked round it, when I saw, only a couple of hundred yards away, the bridge in question, across which a long train of vehicles was passing, loaded with victuals, hay, straw, etc.

On this side hundreds of soldiers were standing; they had taken off their uniforms in the fierce heat, and were busy loading and unloading and changing horses. From time to time the entire scene was hidden by the smoke from numerous burning houses at Lixhe, quite near the river. I walked in the most casual way, in an unconcerned attitude, looked calmly at some of the houses I passed, and which were for the greater part destroyed. The walls were pierced by bullets, the rooms generally burnt out; in the front gardens lay all sorts of furniture, dragged out of the house and then smashed to pieces.

The road was all strewn with straw. I approached

the bridge past burning farms and villas. There the pieces of broken furniture were even lying in the road, and I had to go warily so that I should not stumble. The soldiers looked at me as if they were amused, but I went up to them in the same unconcerned manner and asked them to take me to their commanding officer.

"What do you want with him?"

"I am a Netherland journalist, and want to ask the commander's permission to go to Liège."

"Oh, you are a Netherlander; then come along."

They took me to two officers who stood near the bridge, and told them that I "pretended" to be a Netherland journalist. Having proved this by my papers, the officers gave me an escort of three men, who conducted me to the bridge-commander, on the other side of the Meuse.

I had to walk along the very edge of the unstable bridge in order to avoid the wheels of the passing carriages, which shook the whole bridge and made the rather loose boards clatter. In the meantime, at no considerable distance, some shells fell in the Meuse, fired at the bridge from Port Pontisse. Yet, I did not mind it at all, as all these new experiences stunned me, so to speak; the incessant hellish noises of the batteries, the burning houses, the smoke swooping down, the excited soldiers. . . .

As we crossed the bridge, I asked my escort why these houses were set on fire. I heard then, for the first time, that "they had been shooting," and they told me of cowardly civilians, who shot from the windows at unsuspicious soldiers, or stabbed them treacherously. But of course they had ex-

perienced nothing of the kind; it had happened to troops who were now moving ahead. They had, however, taken part in the revenge, and told of it with glittering eyes: how they fired the houses of francs-tireurs and then shot the people who, nearly stifled, appeared at the windows; how in "holy" anger, in order to avenge their comrades, they subsequently entered the houses and destroyed everything. I did not answer, did not know what to think of it, but shuddered, because it was so gruesome.

They told this, while we were waiting on a couple of protruding boards of the pontoon-bridge, so as to allow some extremely wide carts to pass. Once again shells exploded, a couple of hundred yards behind us, and one made a hole in the bank quite near.

"Horrible!" I sighed. "Have they not yet hit the bridge?"

"Oh yes, it has been destroyed already a couple of times, but we shall teach them a lesson! Why did not the Belgians allow us to pass through their country? What can their little army do against us? As soon as a sufficient number have crossed we shall go for these forts, then on to Brussels, and within a fortnight we shall be in Paris. Liège we have taken already."

"It will cost a great many men!"

"We have plenty of them; but many of us fall by the treacherous shooting of the civilians; they are swine, swine! And these Belgian women . . . they are the dirtiest bitches . . . beastly swine . . ."

The man got more and more excited, but then

he was more than "half-seas over." The smoke made him cough and he stuck in the middle of his "swine." He made me shudder, and I hastened to pull out a packet of cigarettes, some of which I gave to him and his mates. In consequence the two others became more communicative, and in touching harmony assured me that:

"Oh yes, the Netherlanders are our friends; they remain neutral. And that is the best, for otherwise the whole lot would be smashed up, exactly as here in Belgium."

They did not understand, of course, that poor Belgium would have liked nothing better than to remain neutral also.

Those wide carts had passed us now, and we could proceed slowly. The bridge led to a farmhouse with tall trees and underwood. They took me to the right, to a densely overgrown spot, where a clearing had been made amidst some smaller shrubs. In the centre stood a table covered with a shining white cloth, and a goodly number of wine-bottles and glasses. Half a dozen officers in fine uniforms, gilt collars and epaulettes, were seated around it.

The sight of that small group, hidden among the green foliage, was as brilliant as it was surprising. One of the officers, clearly the highest in rank, summoned us to come nearer, and asked the soldiers for an explanation. Standing smartly at attention, they gave it, as a school-child might haltingly recite a lesson learned by heart. The officer whom I thought it convenient to call "Captain" looked searchingly at me and then began:

"Have you got papers?"

"Yes, captain."

I pulled them out: birth certificate, certificate of good conduct, foreign passport, and press-card, which were examined the one after the other.

"Are they genuine?"

"Of course, captain; everything is properly signed, stamped, and legalised."

"And what do you want to write about?"

"I don't know yet. The things I see . . . and . . . of course that cannot do harm to the German army."

"Hm! Hm! All right. So you intend to write friendly about us?"

"Certainly, certainly, sir! Exactly because we hear so many lies from foreign countries about the Germans, I want to try and find out the truth for myself."

"Is that so? Well, the Netherlanders are our friends, and have so much in common with our people."

"Certainly, captain; as a matter of fact we are of the same race."

But here he looked at me in a curious manner, scrutinising my face, as if he asked himself: "Is he pulling my leg, or not?" But not a muscle in my face moved, so that the "Captain" nodded approvingly . . . and wrote out a pass for me to go to Visé! I was not allowed to go to Liège, for, as he said, he did not yet know himself how matters stood there. The other officers overwhelmed me with questions: how matters stood in The Netherlands, and whether Great Britain had already declared war against us? I think that at that ques-

tion I looked utterly perplexed, for in the same breath they told me all they knew about the danger of war for The Netherlands: Great Britain first sent an ultimatum to The Netherlands, to force her into joining the Allies against Germany, and as she had refused, the British Fleet was now on its way to Flushing. I explained to them in detail that they were utterly wrong, but they believed only a half of what I said.

There was a continuous coming and going at the bridge-command, for when I left the shrubberies a great many soldiers of high and low rank, with portfolios and documents, were waiting outside. The soldiers were to escort me back across the bridge, so that I might go on to Visé along the other bank.

Before I got to the bridge I saw something gruesome: a number of corpses of soldiers were lying about and others were brought in . . . a little farther away, on the farm, there they were digging. . . . I looked away quickly; I was not yet accustomed to that sort of thing. Most likely they were men killed a moment ago by shells aimed at the bridge, for wounded men were also brought in on stretchers.

At the other end of the bridge I was left by my escort, and went on alone; on my left the Meuse, on my right burning houses, above me hissing and whistling shells, that came down in front of me and behind me, with tremendous explosions, throwing the loose earth high into the air.

In Devant-le-Pont, a hamlet opposite Visé, the doors of all the houses stood open, as a sign that the

inhabitants did not propose to offer any resistance to the Germans. After much shouting the landlady of a café appeared, distressingly nervous, but doing her utmost to look unconcerned.

"A glass of beer, madame."

"If you please."

"The guns are horrid, madame; are you not afraid?"

"No, sir, we must hope for the best."

"Have the Germans done no harm here yet?"

"Oh no, sir, not at all!"

"Are they tolerably kind?"

"Oh, quite nice people, sir!"

Her reserve told me that I would not get much information here, and, finishing my beer, I asked:

"How much is it, madame?"

"This? Nothing, sir, nothing."

"Nothing! But, madame, I want to pay for what I drink!"

"No, no, I won't take anything for it. It is hot, is it not, and a soldier ought to get something. . . ."

I understood only then why the woman was so full of praise of the Germans, although she was shaking in her shoes: she thought I was a soldier! How heavily weighed the oppressor's hand on the wretched population, if now already the honest Belgian heart became hypocritical!

I had great trouble to make her understand that I was a Netherlander; and that changed at once her opinion for the Germans. She told me then that her husband and children had fled to The Netherlands, as had most of the inhabitants, and

that she was left behind merely because she dawdled too long. And now she was constantly afraid that they might fire her house as they did the others, and murder her . . . for such had been the fate of several of the villagers. Even whole families had been killed.

Many civilians had been put to death, accused of having shot from the houses, and others for refusing to give up requisitioned food. Probably they had none, as preceding military divisions had already taken away all there was. Then some civilians were killed for refusing to work for the enemy. The houses of all these "condemned" had been burnt, and everything the soldiers fancied was looted. As a matter of fact, nearly all the soldiers I met later on were drunk, and they worried me constantly. Only when I had proved to be a Netherlander, they behaved a little better, and started abusing "the cursed Belgians," who, according to them, were all francs-tireurs.

A short distance beyond this little café lies the large bridge across the Meuse. Before the Germans arrived it was partly destroyed by the Belgians, but so inadequately that obviously the enemy could repair it easily. Bombs were therefore fired regularly from Fort Pontisse at the bridge, and only an hour ago it had been hit, with the result that a big hole was made in the undamaged part. In the road also big holes were made by the exploding projectiles. Having passed underneath the viaduct of the bridge, I found myself opposite Visé on the sloping bank of the Meuse. Two boys had been commanded by the Germans to work the ferry-

boat for them, and after I had shown them my passport, they took me to the other side.

It was a fine summer afternoon, and the sun shone on the many bright, whitewashed walls of the old and neat little town, built close to the rapidly flowing river. There was quiet in the streets, although nearly all the inhabitants were sitting on their chairs in the streets. But nobody ventured to move about, and conversations were held only in whispers. As I walked through the village street in my quaint get-up, they pushed their chairs a little closer together as if frightened, and looked shyly at me as if they feared that I was not the harbinger of much good. And all these hundreds of people saluted me humbly, almost cringingly, which filled me with pity.

Visé had not been burnt yet, as had been reported in The Netherlands. Only here and there had the shells done some damage, and hundreds of window-panes had been burst by the vibration of the air. As a token of submission to the invader, small white flags hung from all the windows, and these, along the whole length of a street, made a decidedly lamentable impression.

The inhabitants had already had a variety of experiences. On Tuesday, August 4th, the first German troops arrived before the little town. The gendarmes stationed there offered resistance to the invading enemy, but, being hopelessly outnumbered, they were all shot down. As they were lying on the ground, badly wounded, Dr. Frits Goffin, head of St. Hadelin College, came in great haste as soon as he heard the shooting.

All the wounded were Roman Catholics, and as they saw the approaching priest, they implored him in a loud voice to give them absolution of sins, some making an act of contrition. The priest was unable to come near each of them, and therefore called out in a loud voice: "My Jesus, be merciful!" He then gave them all absolution of sins. But as he kneeled down to perform this sacred task, a hostile bullet whizzed past his ear, and several soldiers who ran by aimed at him, so that he had to seek safety behind a tree. I saw with my own eyes five bullet-holes in the tree that was pointed out to me.

In those first days many civilians were killed, and not only in Visé, but still more in the surrounding villages, Mouland and Berneaux, which were soon burnt down and where many a good man was brought low by the murderous bullets. The savage soldiers killed the cattle also, and a large number of carcases had been lying about for days.

At Visé many men had been commanded to do certain kinds of work, cutting down trees, making of roads, bridges, and so on. Many of them never returned, because they refused to do the humiliating work and were shot. Among these there were even aged people; and I myself stood by the death-bed of a man of ninety, who had been forced to assist in building a bridge, until the poor wretch broke down and was carried to St. Hadelin College, turned into a hospital by Dr. Goffin; there he died.

No wonder that the inhabitants were afraid and looked askance at me as they mistook me for a German.

On this day, August 8th, the reign of terror was still in full force. There were repeated threats to burn the town and to kill the inhabitants if they objected to do work or to deliver certain goods, especially wine and gin, of which thousands of bottles were requisitioned daily. Several times a day they were summoned by a bell and informed what the invader wanted, the necessary threats being added to the command. And the inhabitants, in mortal fear, no longer trusted each other, but searched each other's houses for things that might be delivered to satisfy the Germans.

The entire neighbourhood was still being bombarded from the forts to the north of Liège; several German divisions succeeded, however, in crossing the Meuse near Lixhe. In spite of the shell-fire they passed the pontoon-bridge there, turned into a by-way leading to the canal, near Haccourt, crossed one of the canal-bridges, of which not one had been destroyed, and along another by-way, came to the main road from Maastricht to Tongres, at a spot about three miles from the last-named town.

The shelling went on during the night, and all that time the inhabitants remained in their cellars.

Although I had got farther on my way than I had dared to expect, my journalist's heart longed for more. If I could get to Liège, which was said to have just been taken! But my passport stated that I was only allowed to go to Visé. I thought the matter out, and the longer I thought, the stronger became my desire to go on; and at last I decided to do it.

Near the outskirts of the town I found barricades

which, however, seemed not to have been used, but stray shells had knocked large pieces out of the low, wide wall between the road and the Meuse's flowing water.

There was not much traffic. Only here and there stood some German soldiers, or seriously wounded men were lying on mattresses and chairs. Nearly every house by the roadside had been turned into an emergency hospital, for from all sides they brought in soldiers wounded by shells that had exploded amidst the advancing divisions.

The road along which I walked, the main road between Visé and Liège, was laid under fire from various forts, and every moment I saw on my left clouds rise up from the rocky heights that run along the whole of the Meuse. These clouds were partly formed by smoke from the guns mounted by the Germans against the forts, partly by volumes of earth thrown up by the projectiles from the broken-up soil.

I myself ran great risks too, but I did not mind, and walked on, moved by a consuming desire to get to Liège, and then back to Maastricht, to be able to wire to my paper that I had been to Liège only just after it was taken by the Germans, and that the news, wired from Germany to the Netherland papers, that the forts had been taken was untrue.

I had a short chat with the wounded men near the various houses, on demand showed my passport to those in authority, and was advised as a friendly Netherlander to return, as it was extremely dangerous on the road. But I did not dream of doing

this, as long as I was not compelled, and went on towards Liège amidst this maddening thunder.

I had walked another three miles, when a big crowd of fugitives met me. They seemed to have come a long way, for the majority could hardly walk on, and had taken off their shoes and boots, on account of the scorching heat, going on barefooted in the shade of the tall trees. It was a procession, numbering hundreds of men, women, and children. The aged were supported, the babies carried. Most of them had a small parcel on their back or under their arm. They seemed tired to death, had dark red faces, and betrayed great fear and nervousness. I crossed the road to speak to them, and as soon as they noticed it the whole crowd, numbering hundreds of people, stood still, creeping closer together, women and girls trying hard to hide themselves behind the men, and these doffed their caps timidly.

I was really sorry that I had dressed myself in that grey Norfolk suit, long stockings, a knapsack strapped to the back, and a leather strap with a water-bottle. The unfortunate creatures thought that I was a German soldier. I was bewildered for a moment, but then guessed their thoughts and hastened to comfort them.

I could not get much information from them. Twenty spoke at the same time; in halting, incoherent words they tried to tell me of their experiences, but I could only catch: killed . . . murders . . . fire . . . guns. . . . After much trouble I gathered that they came from the villages to the north of Liège, where the Germans had told them

that on that same day, within an hour, everything would be burned down. Everybody had left these places, a good many had gone to Liège, but these people did not think it safe there either, and wanted to go on to The Netherlands

After giving them some advice how to get to The Netherlands, and offering some words of sympathy, I wanted to go on, but as they realised this, the poor, kind creatures surrounded me; many women began to weep, and from all sides they cried:

"To Liège? You want to go to Liège? But, sir! —but, sir! We fled to escape death, because the Germans are going to burn down everything and shoot everybody. Please don't, sir; they'll kill you . . . kill you . . . shoot you . . . kill you!"

"Come, come," I replied, touched by the kind anxiety of these people. "Come, come; it won't be as bad as all that, and, then, I am a Netherlander."

That "being a Netherlander" had become my stock-argument, and, as a matter of fact, it made me feel calmer. Quietly I made myself free of the surrounding crowd, in order to proceed on my way; but then they got hold of my arms and gently tried to induce me to go with them, so I had to speak more firmly to make them understand that they could not prevail on me. When at last I was able to resume my march, they looked back frequently, shaking their heads, and in their anxiety for me, their fellow-creature, they seemed to forget for a moment their own hardly bearable sorrows.

A moment later a gigantic motor-car came racing down at a great speed. Six soldiers stood up in it,

their rifles pointed at me. I thought that they intended to shoot me and everybody they might meet, but a seventh soldier standing by the side of the chauffeur made a movement with his arms, from which I understood that he wanted me to put my hands up. I did so.

It is a simple affair, this putting up one's hands, but even at such a moment a free citizen has a strong objection against being compelled to this by others, who are no more than one's self, who ask it without any right, except the might derived from the weapon in their hands.

When they had passed, I looked round at the people I had left a moment ago. . . . There they lay in the road, kneeling, lifting their trembling hands, although the motor-car was already a couple of hundred yards away.

Argenteau was not damaged much, but the inhabitants remained quietly inside their houses, or probably stayed in their cellars, for fear of the shells that tore through the air constantly.

By and by I began to feel that I had already walked about twenty miles in this great heat, but I would not think of stopping before reaching my goal.

At Cherath railway-carriages were lying in the road at the level-crossing of Visé-Liège line, farther on barbed-wire cut into pieces, felled trees, and so on. German soldiers had moved these things out of the way, and motor-cars could pass by again. In the village itself I saw a man, with a white armlet, posting up a bill, and as I had seen similar damp

bills sticking on the walls in the other villages, I drew nearer to read it.

The bill ran as follows:—

"Community of . . .

"To the inhabitants.

"The powerful German army, victorious in our district, has promised to respect our land and private possessions.

"In the circumstances in which we are placed it is necessary to retain the greatest possible tranquillity and calm.

"The burgomaster informs the population that any utterance contrary to the regulations will be severely punished.

"THE BURGOMASTER."

The bill-poster replied "yes" or "no" to my questions, whichever answer fitted, and as soon as he had finished his task he hurriedly trotted off. I did not see any other inhabitant.

Outside Cherath a motor-car stood between some partially removed trees. Two officers and three soldiers stood around a map which they had laid on the ground, and with them was a young girl, scarcely twenty years old. She was weeping, and pointed out something on the map, obviously compelled to give information. One of the officers stopped me, was clearly quite satisfied with my papers, but told me that I was not allowed to go on without a permit from the military command. Then I pulled out of my pocket, as if of great importance, the scrap of paper which the commanding officer at the bridge near Lixhe had given me. The

other had scarcely seen the German letters and German stamp when he nodded his head approvingly, and quickly I put the thing back, so that he might not notice that I was allowed only to go to Visé.

At Jupile I saw a pontoon-bridge, not in use for the moment. Just before this place a slightly sloping road leads from the hills to the eastern bank of the Meuse and the main road Visé-Liège. Along this road descended at that moment an immense military force—uhlans, cuirassiers, infantry, more cuirassiers, artillery, munition and forage-carts. The train seemed endless, and although I stood there looking at it for quite a long time, the end had not passed me.

It was an imposing sight to see all these various divisions in their brilliant uniforms coming down along the road, the soldiers' uniforms still without a stain, the horses in new, fine, strong leather harness, and the rumbling and jolting guns. The soldiers sang patriotic songs, and among them rode the officers, proud and imperious, many with a monocle, looking round superciliously.

I was the only civilian in that road, and the soldiers, with much curiosity, stared at me. Whenever I noticed an officer, I gave an elaborate military salute, and with such an air that the officers, although hesitating at first, did not fail to return the salute.

After reaching the main road they turned to the right towards Visé, probably in order to try to cross the Meuse near Lixhe and then proceed to Tongres along the above-mentioned road. It would not be an easy undertaking, for the forts refused to keep

silent, and already many a wounded man was carried on a comrade's horse.

Liège now loomed up in the distance, and the nearer I got, the more civilians I met. They all wore a white armlet, and walked timidly and nervously by the side of the road or street, starting at each thunder-clap of the guns. Near the entrance to the town a small crowd stood on one of the hills, looking at a flying-machine moving from fort to fort and over the city, obviously investigating the effect of the German siege-guns.

At seven o'clock in the evening I entered Liège; and so far I had achieved my end.

CHAPTER II

IN LIÈGE AND BACK TO MAASTRICHT

A GLORIOUS summer evening, quite refreshing after the exhausting heat of the day. Nature invited to restfulness, and so much the more cruel sounded the incessant thunder of the guns, which also boomed from the citadel. As soon as the Germans had taken possession of this old, dilapidated fortress they proceeded to drag their guns on to it, and trained them on the surrounding forts.

The streets offered the same aspect as those at Visé. From each house floated the pitiful little white flag; the people sat together on their "stoeps," for they did not venture out in the streets. Everywhere I was again saluted in the same cringingly polite manner, and eyed with suspicion.

Crowds of soldiers moved through the main streets, revelling, shouting, screaming in their mad frenzy of victors. They sat, or stood, or danced in the cafés, and the electrical pianos and organs had been started again "by order." Doors and windows were opened wide, and through the streets sounded forth the song "Deutschland über Alles" (Germany before all other), which affected the inhabitants

as a provocation and a challenge. Oh! one could see so clearly how thousands of citizens suffered from it, how they felt hurt in their tenderest sentiments. Dull and depressed they stared in front of them, and whenever their set features relaxed, it was a scornful grin.

From warehouses and from shops bales of corn, flour, sugar, and other goods were taken, thrown in heaps and then placed on all sorts of carts and motors. In the most frequented parts military bands had taken their stand, and played amidst the loud jubilation of the soldiers.

I walked about a little longer to examine the damage done. The fine *Pont des Arches* was for the greater part destroyed by the retreating Belgians, as well as the *Pont Maghin.* This is a pity, especially as regards the first-named bridge, so famous as a work of art, and the more so as other bridges had not been touched and could be used by the Germans. The bombardment did not damage the town to any great extent, but it was remarkable that the largest houses had suffered most.

Having walked some thirty miles that day, I began to feel a serious need for rest. But when I applied, there was no room anywhere in the hotels, and where there was room they told me the contrary after a critical glance at my outfit.

I then tried to find the nunnery of the *Sœurs de la Miséricorde,* where one of my cousins had taken the veil. At last, in the Rue des Clarisses I found the huge door of the monastery, and rang the bell. After a few moments a small trellised shutter in the stout door was opened ajar, and a tremulous voice

asked in French what I wanted. I assumed that it was one of the nuns, but I could see nothing through that narrow jar.

"Sister," I said, "I am a cousin of Sœur Eulalie, and should like to see her, to know how she is and take her greetings to her family in The Netherlands."

"Sœur Eulalie! . . . Sœur Eulalie! . . . You . . . you . . . are a . . . cousin . . . of . . . Sœur Eulalie?"

The terrified little sister was unable to stammer anything more, and in great fear suddenly closed the little shutter again.

There I was left! After waiting a while I rang the bell once more, and once more the little shutter was opened in the same timid manner.

"Now, look here, sister, I am a cousin of Sœur . . ."

"No, no, sir, your cousin . . . is not here."

Bang! The shutter was closed again. But I did not give it up, for I needed the sisters' assistance to find a shelter somewhere. Once more I made the bell to clang, and although I was kept waiting a little longer, at last I heard voices whispering behind the gate and once more something appeared behind the trellis.

"Sister," I said then, "if you will only ask Sœur Eulalie to come to this gate she will recognise me, of course?"

"She is your cousin, you say?"

"Certainly, sister. Tell her that Bart of Uncle Henry is here." Again I was switched off, but the communication was this time restored after a few

moments, and then I heard a joyful and surprised exclamation:

"Oh! Bart, is it you?"

So at last the lock of the heavy door screeched, and I was admitted. I noticed that about a score of sisters had gathered behind the gate and were anxiously discussing the "strange occurrence." My meeting with Sœur Eulalie, however, was so cordial that the good nuns lost all anxiety, and I was taken inside accompanied by nearly all the inmates of the convent.

They first wanted me to explain what put it into my head to come to Liège, and how I had managed to get there; but as the sisters heard of my empty stomach and my thirty miles, they would not listen to another word before I had put myself round a good square meal.

In the meantime they themselves had a word or two to say about the fright I gave them; for when I stood at the door they mistook me in my sporting habit for a German officer, and the top of my water-bottle for the butt of a revolver!

The work of these sisters is the education of neglected children, and they spoke about their fears during the last momentous days. During the bombardment they stayed night and day with all those little ones in the heavily vaulted cellars of the nunnery, praying all the time before the Blessed Sacrament that had been removed from the chapel and taken into the cellar for safety.

They constantly heard the boom, boom of the shells exploding near by, and each time thought that their last hour had struck. The gloomy cellar

depressed them still more, and nobody really believed that there was any chance of being saved. So the little sisters prayed on, preparing each other for death, and looking for the approaching end in quiet resignation.

For the moment all they knew was that the Germans were in the town, as none of them yet had ventured outside the building. At present their great fear was that Germans might be billeted on them. . . . Oh! they might take everything if only they did not come themselves.

When I left I got a lot of addresses of relations in The Netherlands, and undertook to send a postcard to each of these. They also gave me an introduction to the proprietor of an hotel whom they knew, in which they asked him to give me a bed; and thus armed I succeeded at last. It was high time too, for at nine o'clock everyone had to be at home. In the hotel everything was dark, for there was no gas in the town. At last I could lie down on my bed, and had a good rest, although I could not sleep a wink. I was too tired and had seen and experienced too much that day.

The next morning at six I was out and about again. I had not been able to get any breakfast, for the people themselves had nothing. The Germans had called at all the hotels and shops requisitioning everything in stock to feed the thousands who had invaded Liège like so many locusts. The inhabitants practically starved during those days, and carefully saved up bits of bread already as hard as bricks. It was a good thing that the night before I had eaten something at the nunnery, for although at a

shop I offered first one, and later on two francs for a piece of bread, I could not get any.

All the forts thundered away again, and the guns of the Germans were also busy on the citadel and the various surrounding heights. Already early in the morning a terrible and suffocating smoke of fire and gunpowder hovered over Liège. The smoke came down also from the burning villages, like Bressoux, on the slopes of the hills near Liège. The flames flared up from the houses and offered a melancholy sight.

German officers told me, with full particulars, how the inhabitants of those burning villages had offered German soldiers poisoned cocoa, coffee, and cigarettes, for which crime three hundred civilians had been shot during the night in a Liège square.

As even high officers told me those things, not without some emotion, I began to believe them and wrote something about them to my paper. But what was made clear to me at a later visit! That there was not a word of truth in the whole story of that poisoning; that on that day and in that square no shooting had taken place; that a couple of days before the population had been ordered to leave their houses within two hours without any reason being given; and afterwards several houses had simply been burned down.

The Liège people were already up and about, and wandered through the streets full of fear, for all sorts of rumours were heard—that civilians were murdered, the town was to be burned down, and that a start would be made very soon. As they looked at those burning hamlets yonder they be-

lieved the rumours, and went nearly mad for fear; the men as well as the women could not help themselves, and wept. During the night various posters were stuck on the walls about military action. The following is the translation of one of these:—

"The municipal Government of Liège remind their fellow-citizens, and all staying within this city, that international law most strictly forbids civilians to commit hostilities against the German soldiers occupying the country.

"Every attack on German troops by others than the military in uniform not only exposes those who may be guilty to be shot summarily, but will also bring terrible consequences on leading citizens of Liège now detained in the citadel as hostages by the Commander of the German troops. These hostages are:—

"1. The Right Rev. Rutten, bishop of Liège.
"2. Kleyer, burgomaster of Liège.
"3. Grégoire, permanent deputy.
"4. Armand Fléchet, senator.
"5. Van Zuylen, senator.
"6. Eduard Peltzer, senator.
"7. Colleaux, senator.
"8. de Ponthière, member of the Town Council.
"9. Van Hoeyaerden, member of the Town Council.
"10. Falloise, alderman.

"Bishop Rutten and Mr. Kleyer are allowed to leave the citadel for the present, but remain at the disposition of the German commanders as hostages.

"We beseech all residents in the municipality to guard the highest interests of all the inhabitants and of those who are hostages of the German Army, and

not to commit any assault on the soldiers of this army.

"We remind the citizens that by order of the general commanding the German troops, those who have arms in their possession must deliver them immediately to the authorities at the Provincial Palace under penalty of being shot.

"The Acting Burgomaster,
"V. HENAULT.

"LIÈGE,
"August 8th."

Fear reigned everywhere in the bustling streets; people shouted at each other that the villages burned already, that by and by they would start with the town, that all civilians would be killed, and other terrible things. The Germans looked at all this with cynical composure, and when I asked some of them what the truth was, they shrugged their shoulders, said that they knew nothing about it, but that it might be true, because all Belgians were swine who shot at the soldiers or poisoned them. All of them were furious because the Belgians did not allow them to march through their country.

Fugitives arrived from the surrounding villages, who also spoke of nothing but arson, destruction, and murder. They frightened the Liège population still more, hundreds of whom packed up some of their belongings and fled. They stumbled and fell across the barricades in the streets, blinded as they were by fear, and blinded also by the smoke which settled down on the city and polluted the air.

Matters stood so in Liège on the morning of August 9th, when the second day of the occupation

by the Germans had not yet passed. The Belgian field army, which had bravely defended the ground under the protection of the forts, and inflicted heavy losses upon the Germans, had to retreat before their superior numbers, leaving the further defence of the Meuse to the forts. But a high price had been paid for Liège, for the German losses were immense, and on the ninth they were still busy burying their dead. The Germans lost many men, especially near Lixhe and the Forts Bachon and Fleron.

At that moment the possession of Liège was of little advantage to the Germans, as on this 9th of August the Belgians still held all the forts. This was the most important news that I was about to send to The Netherlands, for when I left the Netherland newspapers had published the news wired from Berlin that all the forts had fallen.

But the Germans were efficient, for during the night they had laid down the rails on which in the morning they transported parts of the heavy ordnance that would demolish all the Belgian defences.

A few minutes after I left the town a scene drew my attention. A lady stood there with a little girl; the lady seemed to urge the child to do something to which it objected. She refused to take a bag full of various small parcels pressed upon her, and clutched hold of the lady's skirts. I wanted to know what was the matter, got a little nearer, and was amazed to hear them both speak Netherland. I could not help asking what the trouble was and whether I might be of service.

"No, no, sir," the lady said. "Oh, oh, it is so

terrible! By and by the Germans will burn Liège and kill us all. She is the little daughter of my brother at Maastricht, and came to visit us a few days before war broke out, but now she will be killed too, for she refuses to go away."

"But, madame, you do not mean to send that child to Maastricht by itself?"

"It must be done, surely, it must be done! That is her only chance of escape, and if she stops here she will be killed with the rest of us. Oh! . . . oh! . . ."

"But really, madame, that is only senseless gossip of the people. You need not be afraid, the Germans will not be so cruel as all that!"

"Not? Oh! they are sure to do it. All the villages are burning already. The smoke suffocates us here. In Bressoux there is not a house left standing, and in other villages all civilians have been killed, men, women, and children. Not even the tiniest babies escaped. . . . Oh! . . . and now it is Liège's turn!"

I knew about Bressoux. I had seen the flames burst out from many houses, and I had reliable information also from other villages about the slaughter that took place there, although this lady of course exaggerated when she said that "not even the tiniest babies escaped."

Need I say that I did all I could to make the woman a little more reasonable, and make her understand that it would not do to let a child of ten walk by itself from Liège to Maastricht, and least of all in these dire times. But I could not make her see this, and this instance proves all the more,

perhaps, how upset the inhabitants of Liège were that morning; they were nearly out of their senses for fear.

Of course I did not allow the little girl to go by herself, but took her with me. It was a wearying expedition in the excessive heat of that day. Very soon the child was no longer able to carry her small belongings, and, though already sufficiently loaded myself, I had to take her bundle as well. She was scarcely able to walk more than a thousand yards at a stretch, and had then to sit down on the grass by the roadside and rest. She did not quite understand what was going on, but she had an undefined feeling of fear on that long, deserted road, where we did not meet anybody except some well-hidden or stealthily moving German patrols who suddenly pointed their rifles at us.

After the explanations required of us they allowed us to go on. The incessant roar of the guns made the girl tremble for fear, and the stinging smoke made her cough. After much trouble we got at last as far as Herstal, where I had promised her a short rest.

This fine large village, actually a suburb of Liège, was quite deserted, not a living being was to be seen. I entered shops and cafés, called at the top of my voice, but got no reply anywhere. I was inclined to believe that everybody had fled. And they would have been quite right too, for huge columns of smoke rose up from the heights around the place, four or five in a row, after a booming and rolling peal like thunder had seemed to rend the sky.

The German artillery had taken up their positions

here, and bombarded the forts in their immediate neighbourhood. These did not fail to answer, and rained shells on the enemy's batteries. One heard their hissing, which came nearer and nearer, until they fell on the slopes or the tops of the hills and burst with a terrific explosion. Many a time we saw this happen only a few hundred yards away. Then the air trembled, and I felt as if my legs were blown from underneath me. Broken windows too fell clattering on the "stoeps."

We entered another café, and once more I shouted for the inhabitants at the top of my voice. At last I heard a feeble sound somewhere in the hall, which I entered, but as I saw no one there, I called out once more. Then I heard distinctly, and knew whence the answer came. I opened a door, behind which stairs led to the cellar, and from there I was at last able to speak to some of the Herstal people. I heard that all of them stayed in their cellars for fear of the bombardment.

My request to allow the child to stay at the café for half an hour was granted, and I went through the village towards the place whence the German batteries sent their destructive fire. At last I got as far as the top of a hill, from which I could see two forts shrouded in a cloud of smoke, which was also the case with the German batteries.

I could not stop there long, for I was actually within range. I saw a number of shells explode and twice hit a farmhouse, which was destroyed for the greater part. So I returned as quickly as possible to my little protégée, and went on with her, follow-

ing the road as far as the canal, and then along this to Maastricht.

On one of the hills, slightly to the south of Haccourt, on the west bank of the Meuse and the canal, a German battery was firing at Fort Pontisse. The gunners there were quite kind, and they felt no fear at all, for although they shelled the fort continuously, it seemed that nothing was done by way of reply to their fire. The shells from the fort flew hissing over our heads, in the direction of Lixhe, which proved that Fort Pontisse was still chiefly busy with the pontoon-bridge at that place.

Until now we had walked along the right bank of the canal, until we crossed one of the many bridges. The little girl was well-nigh exhausted; from time to time I gave her a rest, and then again I carried her a part of the way.

A good many soldiers were lying round about the high cement factory of Haccourt. The factory itself seemed to be used as a station for observations, for suddenly a voice roared from a top window: "Stop those people!" And we were stopped and taken to a small table where three officers were sitting drinking wine. The colonel asked for my papers, which he did not consider sufficient, as I had no passport from some German military authority. So I drew out again the bridge-commander's scrap of paper which said that I was permitted to go from Lixhe to Visé.

"Is this then the road to Visé?"

"No, sir, I am returning from there."

"Where then is Visé?"

"That way, sir!"

"That way? But how did you get here then?"

"You see, sir, the bridge across the Meuse has been destroyed, and in order to get back I had to walk first towards . . . towards . . . Liège . . . and . . . and . . . and then they ferried me over somewhere down there, and told me that I had to go along the canal to get to Maastricht."

"Is that so? Well, it is not very clear! And that little girl?"

"That is a Netherland girl, sir, who was staying at her aunt's at Liège . . . I mean to say at Visé, and whom I take now with me to Maastricht."

The officer went on shaking his head at my answers, and I felt as if this might be the end of my fine little adventure. But I could not tell him that I had gone to Liège with that permit for Visé!

At Fort Pontisse or Lierce they seemed to have noticed that the factory was a station for observation. As the officer was still thinking about my case, one of those infernal monster shells crashed down among a group of soldiers, only some yards away. Those who were not hit ran away, but they came back soon, and took up seven or eight comrades, whom they carried into the factory. I shuddered when I saw what had happened, and through the shock the sight gave me I involuntarily jerked my arms.

"Stand still!" the officer thundered.

He looked for a moment at the spot where the deaths happened, from which the victims were carried away, and then suddenly asked in a kinder tone of voice:

"Is there any further news about the war in The Netherlands?"

I saw that I must take advantage of his changed mood and his curiosity, and I hastened to reply:

"Yes, that the French are advancing towards Liège, and that the British have landed in Belgium."

"What?"

"It is as I tell you!"

"But are you sure? Where are the French now, and where did the British land?"

"Well, all the Netherland papers have extensive official reports about it. The French are now at Namur and the British landed troops at Ostend. . . ."

"Wait! wait! wait!"

Quickly he summoned an orderly and gave some orders, and a few minutes later four more officers drew round the table, on which a large map of Belgium was displayed. Their tone became at once charmingly sweet and kind, and a soldier offered me some lemonade from small bottles kept cool in a basin filled with cold water.

I did not feel very comfortable after what had happened to those soldiers who lost their lives so cruelly sudden, or in any case had been seriously wounded, while the officers took little notice of them. But it was desirable to behave as discreetly as possible, and so to get a permit to Maastricht.

I had to repeat everything about the advance of the French and the landing of the British, whilst they followed my story on the map. But I was soon in a cold sweat, for of course I knew practically nothing, neither of the French nor of the British,

and each time when one of the officers pressed for details I was in mortal fear that I might contradict myself. But I stuck to my guns until the end, and assured them that the French had crossed the Belgian frontier near Givet, and were now near Namur, whereas the British, disembarking at Ostend, had advanced as far as Ghent.

As soon as they had got all the information they required, the commanding officer ordered a patrol of cyclists of six men to leave their kit and rifles behind, but to take a Browning, and deliver a rapidly written letter at Liège.

They were now very friendly, and spoke even with great kindliness about the Netherlanders in general. They let me proceed also on my way to Maastricht, giving me their best wishes.

My little protégée was, however, soon very tired and complained that her feet ached. I had to carry her for nearly a mile and a half before we arrived at the Netherland Custom House, where I left her behind, as she was now safe. I went on to Maastricht alone, wired to my paper, and then saw the worried, but soon extremely happy parents of the little girl. They went at once to the Netherland frontier to take their child home.

I had succeeded. I had been in Liège, the first foreign journalist who got there after her fall, and was able to contradict the numerous reports about the conquest of the forts which had made the round of the newspapers for several days.

CHAPTER III

ROUND ABOUT LIÈGE

DURING the fights round the forts I made a good many tours and was able to contradict several German reports about alleged successes. The atrosities in the villages around Liège did not cease, and constantly fresh crowds of refugees came to Maastricht.

In order to examine once more the state of affairs around Liège, I decided to pay another visit to that town.

Starting in the early morning of August 15th, I arrived at Visé without much trouble, after having been led across the Lixhe bridge once more. Since my first visit the bridge had been destroyed three times over, and this new one seemed very weak. As I stood there looking at it, a motor lorry had to cross it, and the bridge gave way near the bank. Another motor had then to pull the lorry up to the top of the bank, and this made the bridge give way still further.

For the rest the transports were not much troubled now, for obviously the bridge was no longer the objective of the Belgian guns. At Visé I was even told that Fort Pontisse had just been

taken and only Lierce could harass the troops, who, after crossing the bridge, advanced towards Tongeren.

Many things had happened at Visé since my first visit. Under the pretext that the church spire could indicate to Fort Pontisse in which direction to shoot, parafin had been poured over church and spire and fire set to them. It was a venerable ancient structure, built ten centuries ago, the fine stained windows of which were well known.

The inhabitants looked upon the church as a special sanctuary, as the bones of St. Hadelin were kept there. Before the fire these relics had been removed to the vicarage secretly, and then to St. Hadelin College, the only large building that escaped the general destruction next day.

Immediately after the church was set on fire, the dean was arrested, as well as the burgomaster and five reverend sisters. These last-mentioned had been in prison a fortnight, when at last the Germans discovered that the little sisters were of German nationality. The Very Reverend Dean had been treated very badly during his captivity.

There was dire want in the little town, for the Germans had been requisitioning everything until there was nothing left. And as during the first days of the war all traffic had been stopped, it was impossible to bring in fresh supplies. The pieces of bread the people still had were like bricks, and several days old; and yet I could not get any of it.

But the German troops had ample provisions for themselves, and as an officer noticed that I went all over the town to find some food in one of the

restaurants, he offered me, the "friendly" Netherlander, something to eat at the Guard House. This I declined, however, for I could not have enjoyed bread taken from the starving population.

There was still a real reign of terror, and constantly the town-crier's bell was heard in the streets, informing the people that the victors required something or other. Only a few days ago it was announced that all bicycles had to be delivered at the bridge within twenty-four hours. Any person who after that time was found in possession of such a vehicle would be shot, and his house burned down. With similar threats all arms were requisitioned, but with the explicit addition that this referred also to old, and broken arms, or those which had been taken to pieces. Eatables and drinkables were also constantly claimed under threats of arson.

From Visé I went again across the Meuse to the road along the canal. Nearing Haccourt, I noticed that Fort Pontisse was actually silent, but Lierce still in full action. The Germans had mounted long-range guns on the hills between Lancey and Haccourt, whence they could place Fort Lierce under fire. A German officer, after some coaxing, allowed me to witness the operations for a short time. I found a place near some heavy guns, and sat down amid some underwood. The shooting from Lierce was very fierce, but only by the plumes of smoke could I tell whereabouts the fort might be. The shells came down near us, but during the half hour of my stop not one made a hit. They all fell short of us.

It was a cruel sight. At a tolerably quick pace

hundreds of soldiers marched out in the direction of the fort, dragging light ordnance with them. One of the officers explained to me that the big guns could not yet operate here; and now a division of foot-artillery was commanded to occupy a small hill near the fort. The big guns had to support them on the way. The guns roared as if all the thunderbolts of heaven had been flung into space. The smoke of the powder poisoned the air and made me cough. Gradually my surroundings were enveloped in a thin haze, which became denser and more suffocating the longer the guns roared. And at last those hundreds of men, dragging their guns along the byways, looked merely like shades.

For quite a quarter of an hour they seemed to proceed successfully, as obviously not one shell exploded in their neighbourhood. But suddenly all along their line dark masses several yards high rose up. This was the effect of numerous exceedingly well-aimed shells on the dry, loose sand. Soon the men were surrounded by those thick clouds of dust, and only during the first few minutes I saw here and there one of those shades in human form tumble down, evidently hit by one of the projectiles. Then I saw nothing for a long while, excepting the thick wall of dust, which seemed to remain standing up, for constantly the shells threw up anew the earth that had only just fallen down.

The dust-wall extended gradually as the distance grew covered by the Germans in their flight to their former positions. But at last we saw the first men emerge in complete disorder from that driving cloud. Some on the right, others on the left, here

and there also small groups which courageously dragged their guns with them, as they saved themselves from that infernal downpour.

Five minutes later the smoke had disappeared almost, and I was able to see what had happened on the field in front of me. Terrible! On all sides lay scattered the lads, who but a short time ago started with so much enthusiasm, and here and there a gun knocked over, five, six corpses lying around it.

In front of me, behind me, on all sides, the guns boomed, clouds of dust and smoke filled the air, making it impossible to see much, which made the awe and terror endurable; but after the air became clear again, and the sun shed glowing light on the beautiful fields, it was terrible to think that all those dots in the plain were the bodies of young men, cruelly crushed by the infernal products of human ingenuity. It was agony to see here and there a body rising up, merely to fall down again immediately, or an arm waving as if invoking help.

And by my side stood officers and soldiers raging and cursing. To them came the returning men, blood running along their faces from insignificant wounds, and they bawled and bellowed, and thundered with a thousand curses that they wanted to go back and try again. How ghastly they rolled their eyes in frenzied excitement! Some pointing at me asked the officer who I was, and he explained. Then I had to listen to endless imprecations against the civilian population of Belgium, who, according to them, consisted entirely of francs-tireurs, who all of them deserved to be shot, and to have their

houses burned down. To repeat the coarse words which they sputtered out in their rage would only cause disgust.

The officer assured me that a new effort would be made soon, as they were commanded to take Pontisse and Lierce at any price, the seventh and ninth regiment of foot-artillery of Cologne being selected for the purpose.

I did not want to witness that second attack, and, after thanking the officer, resumed my journey along the canal-road to Liège.

Near Herstal the Germans were crossing by the large bridge, which the Belgians had preserved to their own disadvantage.

In Liège things were no longer so depressing as at the time of my first visit. There was some traffic in the streets, and by order of the German authorities the shops had been reopened.

In a meadow east of the city I saw three big guns mounted, the biggest I had seen as yet. They kept up a continuous and powerful cannonade at the forts near the town, that had not yet been taken. There were three of them left, of which Loncin was the most important.

A little farther away they were still busy with Lierce, but excepting these four, all the forts were now taken by the Germans. I stood there for a moment, gazing at these cannon, the presence of which was clearly unknown to the Belgians, for their artillery took no notice of them. Only the day before these guns had started shelling the forts, and on the evening of August 15th they had silenced two of them; but Loncin kept up the fight.

During the evening I was granted an audience by the Right Reverend Monseigneur Rutten, Bishop of Liège. The venerable, aged prelate received me very affably, but he was deeply impressed by the terrible fate that had overwhelmed his poor native country. He himself had suffered exceedingly bad treatment at the hands of the Germans. First he and the other hostages were imprisoned in the citadel, where he was locked up in a small shanty, with a leaking roof, so that the torrential rain entered it freely. Wet and cold, the Bishop passed that day without being offered any food, and, as stated above, was at last allowed to go home.

He told me a good many other instances of ill-treatment, but as I gave him my word of honour not to mention them, my mouth is sealed. He himself was visited a few days later by the German commanding general, who offered his apologies.

That same evening many more houses were burned down, more particularly in Outre-Meuse, although no valid reason was given for that.

The next day, Sunday, August 16th, I was already about at five o'clock in the morning, and soon witnessed some historical shots. In the park on one of the boulevards the Germans had been digging for two days, and prepared a firm foundation upon which big guns might be mounted. I saw one of these guns that morning, and at about half-past five three shots were fired from it at short intervals, by which Fort Loncin was completely destroyed, as was indicated by the terrific explosions which followed the third shot. After these shots I was quite benumbed for several minutes; in all the streets

of Liège they caused the greatest commotion, which became all the greater because large numbers of cavalry happened to ride through the town, and all the horses started rearing.

Was the gun I had seen there one of the notorious forty-two centimetre monsters? I should not like to wager my head in affirming that. It was an inordinately unwieldy and heavy piece of ordnance, but during the first days of the war nothing or very little had yet been said or written about these forty-two's, and I did not pay sufficient attention to the one I saw. Only after the fall of Loncin did all those articles about the forty-two's appear in the papers, and the Germans certainly asserted that they destroyed Loncin by means of such a cannon.

But it is equally certain that at Liège as well as at Namur and Antwerp the Austrian thirty-point-five mortars were used, siege-guns chiefly, and these were taken by the German soldiers for forty-two's. These Austrian mortars were equally misnamed in German, French, and even Netherland illustrated papers.

However, the effect of these Austrian mortars was terrible enough. I could not form a correct opinion about them by the sound of the shot; and only those who were in the fort that was hit were able to realise the terrific results. Hence the interest of the report by an officer, who escaped after having been made a prisoner at Loncin. He told my colleague of *De Tijd* at Antwerp about it. After having related how, during nearly ten days, the fort had been defended heroically and reso-

lutely, he gave the following description of the final struggle:—

"On August 14th, at about four o'clock in the afternoon, the expected storm burst; for twenty-five hours the invisible siege-guns poured their torrent of projectiles on the fort. Flares of fire and dense clouds of smoke belched through the crevices. As the enemy's batteries could not be located, their fire could not be answered. The artillerists of the garrison were then taken to the spacious chief gallery, which offered a safe refuge under its vault, about two and a half to three yards thick. Outside the sentries were watching. In the parts near the entrance it was unendurable; the heavy projectiles from the guns mounted in the town had nibbled away the outer wall, only a yard and a half thick. There were as yet no casualties among the garrison; calmly they waited for the infernal tempest to subside and the enemy to storm the fort, for they had sworn to repulse the assault.

"General Leman, Commander Naessens, and all the officers were splendid in their imperturbable courage. They found the words that went straight to the hearts of their men. These fellows looked more like bronze statues than human beings. The projectiles hammered at the walls and smashed huge pieces, penetrating into the parts near the entrance. The rest of the fort withstood splendidly the hurricane of hostile steel and fire. During the night the bombardment stopped, and then the commanding officer went to inspect the cupolas.

"The larger ones had suffered little; but the majority were jammed by fragments of concrete and steel, which struck between the armour and the front-

armour. The small quick-fire cupolas had not been touched by any projectile. 'It is all right,' he said, 'we shall be able to repulse the enemy's attack.'

"At dawn the bombardment started again, but only the front was seriously damaged. The garrison stood as firm as a rock. Here and there the beginnings of a fire were soon extinguished.

"Then a frightful thing happened. The men had finished breakfast, some were sleeping quietly in spite of the thundering noise. The assault was expected to commence during the next night.

"And then the disaster followed suddenly. At about five o'clock a tremendous explosion shook the fort to the foundations; the powder-magazine had caught fire. It is impossible to describe the appalling results of that explosion; the entire middle-part of the fort collapsed in a stupendous cloud of flames, smoke and dust; it was an awful destruction, an immense avalanche of masses of concrete, fragments of armour, which in their fall crushed to death nearly the whole of the garrison. From this fantastical, confused mass, overwhelming clouds of suffocating smoke escaped through some crevices and holes.

"After this infernal rumble, deadly silence followed, interrupted only by the groans of the wounded. The German artillery ceased to fire, and from all sides their infantry came rushing on, their faces expressing the terror caused by such great calamities. They were no longer soldiers longing to destroy, but human beings hurrying to go to the assistance of other human beings.

"German sappers and other military men cleared away the dead and the wounded. They also discovered General Leman, whose orderlies, who had a miraculous escape from death, were already busy in rescuing him from underneath the ruins.

"They were all unrecognisable, their faces were black from smoke, their uniforms in rags, their hands covered with blood. The general was put on a stretcher, and carried outside the fort across the heaps of obstacles; there he was attended to by a surgeon. He had lost consciousness. As soon as he recovered it, he pressed the hands of two Belgian officers. 'It is all over; there is nothing left to defend. But we did our utmost courageously.'

"A German officer came nearer, and, uncovering his head, said in a voice trembling with emotion: 'General, what you performed is admirable!' Evidently these words slightly comforted the defender of Liège, who before long was removed by motor-car to an ambulance in the town."

Such was the end of Fort Loncin, and by its fall the last obstacle was removed by which the undisturbed progress of the German armies might have been prevented. The brave defenders of Loncin did not surrender, but stood their gound until they were buried under the ruins of their own defences. According to information from another source, Lierce had succumbed the night before.

Early next morning I walked through the streets of Liège, dull and depressed, deploring the fact that such clumsy, heavy iron monsters had been able to crush this stout defence and such men. As I reached the Place du Marché, there arrived three hundred disarmed Belgian warriors, escorted by a strong German force. They stopped in the square, and soon hundreds of the people of Liège crowded around them. They were the defenders of Fort Pontisse.

Men and women tried to break through the German cordon, but were repulsed roughly. So they threw fruit, cigars, and cigarettes at them. The lads looked gratefully at their compatriots, but for the rest stared in front of them in dismal depression. Once and again a name was called, as a relative or friend was recognised. Some shed tears.

Whether neutral or foreigner, no one could help being deeply moved. Men and women, boys and girls, pressed once more through the German fence, just to shake hands with someone they had recognised. No wailing followed, but when hands were gripped, with a suppressed sob, they said:

"Bear up, lad! Keep courage; it will soon be different."

And the answer was:

"We did our utmost to the last, but it was impossible to go on."

I could not help myself, but also pressed through the Germans, as I wanted to exchange a few words with the Belgians. This was possible for a very few moments only, in which they told me that they had been firing night and day in order to harass the Germans who crossed the river, but they had to yield at the end, when the Germans put Belgian civilians in front of themselves when attacking the fort.

I was roughly pushed back by the German soldiers twice over. I broke through only to be repulsed again. They got into difficulties with the huge crowd, who pushed through on all sides, bought up the stock of surrounding shops, and threw chocolates and other sweets, cigars and cigarettes, at their

boys. Then a bugle sounded, and the Belgians once more were arrayed in files. They calmly lighted their cigarettes, and as the order "march" was given, they took off their caps, waved them through the air, and, turning to the Liège crowd, exclaimed: "Vive la Belgique." Then hundreds of caps, hats, and arms were waved in response, the air resounding the cry: "Vive la Belgique. Au revoir! Au revoir!"

As I felt myself one with the population, I uncovered my head and enthusiastically joined in the cry: "Au revoir! Au revoir!"

. . . . . .

When I was half way between Liège and the Netherland frontier, I noticed that the village of Vivignes was burning in various places. It is a beautiful spot, quite concealed between the green trees on the slope of the hills, west of the canal. And the finest and largest farms were exactly those ablaze. The fire crackled fiercely, roofs came down with a crash and a thud. Not a living being could be seen. From the windows of the burning houses small white flags hung, and they too were one by one destroyed by the fire. I counted forty-five farms that were burning, destroyed by the raging flames.

In a café, lower down, near the canal I saw a number of German soldiers, and was successful in having a chat with the inn-keeper, at the farthest corner of the bar. I asked him, of course, what they meant by burning the village, and he told me that the Germans had made a number of unsuccessful attacks on Fort Pontisse, until at last they reduced

it to silence. They were now so near that they could open the final assault. They were afraid, however, of some ambush, or underground mine, and the Friday before they had collected the population, whom they forced to march in front of them. When they had got quite near they dared not enter it yet, and drove the priest and twelve of the principal villagers before them. That is how Pontisse was conquered.

Later on I heard the same story from several other inhabitants.

The people had been in deadly terror, and women and old men, fearing that they would be killed, had fallen on their knees beseeching the soldiers to spare them. At present many women and old men, and even strong men, were laid up with violent feverish attacks of nerves.

Only because these wretched people had not promptly obeyed the order of the military to march against the fort in front of the soldiers, Vivignes had been punished, and that morning over forty of the best houses had been set on fire.

I shuddered at the thought that in these days such barbarities were possible. I asked the soldiers whether I was allowed to enter the burning village, but the commanding sergeant refused his consent.

I also asked the inn-keeper whether he felt no fear in those surroundings. But, shrugging his shoulders, he answered: "All we can do is to wait quietly. I do all in my power to keep them in a good temper, give them beer and cigars, and yesterday killed one of my two cows for them. I may have lost every-

thing at the end of the war, . . . but even so, let it be, if I can only save the life of my family and keep a roof over my head. But my anxiety is great enough, for, you understand, I have two daughters . . . and . . . and . . ."

We had got near the door of the room that stood ajar, and from there came the sound of a couple of girls' voices: "Hail, Mary. . . . Hail, Mary. . . ."

The frightened maidens were saying their rosary.

The news, that all the forts had now been taken was quickly communicated to the surrounding military posts, and in consequence the soldiers were in a wanton mood. Most of the houses which I passed had their doors and windows smashed and broken, but the most provoking was that soldiers had compelled the people in the cafés along the canal to open their pianos and make their musical automatons play. To the tunes of these instruments they danced, yelling and shouting. No greater contrast was imaginable than that between such scenes and the burning village with the frightened inhabitants around it.

Near Haccourt, by the bank of the Meuse, I noticed a terrible glare of fire and dense smoke. It was an alarming sight, and made me fear the direst things. I considered for a moment whether I should go there or not, fearing that I had already taxed my nerves too much. Yet, I made up my mind to go, and by a side-way got to the Meuse, near Visé. German engineers were busy here laying telephone wires, and an officer stopped me, threatening me with his revolver. It was obvious that they

were no longer accustomed to see civilians on that road. After having examined my passport and seeing that I was a Netherland journalist, he became very friendly, and politely urged me not to go farther.

"Why not, sir?" I asked.

"Well, there is a huge fire yonder; everything is burning!"

"How did that come about?"

"Well, it seems that the civilians cannot understand that only soldiers may fight soldiers, and for that reason the whole place has been set on fire."

"Devant-le-Pont?"

"No, Visé."

"Visé? Do you mean to say, sir, that the whole of Visé has been set on fire?"

"Certainly!"

"But . . . but . . .! May I go there?"

"I must advise you not to, for it is extremely dangerous, but if you like . . ."

"Very well, sir, then I shall go there!"

CHAPTER IV

VISÉ DESTROYED: A PREMEDITATED CRIME

One of the first things I have to deal with is also one of the most fearful I ever saw, and I only hope that I may never again witness the like of it.

I have mentioned already the reign of terror with which the Germans ruled the wretched townlet ever since they entered it. Something fateful might happen any moment, and actually occurred during the night of August 15th and 16th.

On that evening the soldiers, rough fellows from East Prussia, had been revelling in the cafés, shouting filthy ditties in the streets, and most of them in a very advanced state of intoxication. At ten o'clock suddenly a shot was heard. The fellows took their rifles, which they had placed against the walls, or on the tables of the cafés, and ran into the street shouting in a mad rage: "They have been shooting!" The most tipsy began to shoot at doors and windows simultaneously in various parts of the town, which made the people in the houses scream, and this excited the mad drunken soldiers all the more.

They forced their way into several houses, knocking down the frightened inhabitants when these tried to stop them.

It is stated that some of the wretched people were even pinioned and beaten. Their assailants then stumbled up the stairs and began to shoot wildly from the upper stories into the dark streets, where their own raving comrades were rushing about like madmen. Some civilians who in great fear had come to their front door to see what was happening were shot down.

After this game had been going on for some time, the order was given: "Everybody must come outside." Doors and windows were forced open and broken, and men, women, and children driven out of the houses. They were at once ruthlessly separated. Men who assisted their aged mothers, or carried their little babies, were taken away from their families, and driven away, leaving their wailing and weeping wives and children behind, while the flames from burning houses threw a lurid light on the sad scenes of that terrible evening.

The poor wretches, who expected to be killed at any moment, were driven into squares or the meadows, where they were exposed to the chilly night air, so that several babies perished. Only the next morning were the women and children allowed to leave—that is to say, they were told to take the shortest way to Maastricht.

A number of the men were taken to Germany, the others were kept as prisoners in the neighbourhood, and by and by had to suffer the shame of being compelled to work for the enemy. Amongst them

were men who had never done any manual work, such as an aged notary public.

Even a doctor of the Red Cross established at St. Hadelin College had been removed in his white overall and wearing his Red Cross armlet. This was Dr. Labye, who already had rendered signal services to the wounded Germans. In consequence of his detention twenty of them were left in the hospital without medical attendance. . . .

During the night only a few houses were burnt down; the general destruction followed the next morning, Sunday, August 16th, and just as I reached the little town the flames were raging all over the place in a fierce blaze.

I shall never forget that sight. The Meuse separated me from the raging blaze on the opposite bank. The flames roared violently, roofs and rafters and walls crashed down, and the wood of living trees was burning and screeching loudly. I saw but a sea of fire, one glaring glow, and the air was scorchingly hot. A light breeze blew through the place, and made clouds of smoke to whirl through the streets like avalanches of snow. The view down the longer streets leading straight from the hill-tops to the Meuse was very fantastic.

The wind seemed to play with the smoke, rolling dense volumes down the slopes which dispersed only when they reached the bank along the river. Whilst the flames soared high up from the roofs, the walls of the houses stood still erect, and everywhere in the windows one saw those miserable little white flags, symbols of submission, mute prayers

that submission should be rewarded by sparing the life and possession of the inhabitants. . . .

I stood near the spot where the ferry-boat used to take people across; but to cross was now out of the question, for any one alighting on the opposite side would be landed in the scorching glare. Therefore, I returned to Lixhe, where I might try to cross the river by the pontoon-bridge, and get to Visé along the other bank of the Meuse.

On the way I was stopped by two soldiers, one of whom examined my papers, and, finding that I was a journalist, revealed himself as a colleague, in ordinary times editor of the *Kölnische Zeitung*. He shook both my hands quite excitedly, glad to meet a colleague, and, better still, one from the "friendly" Netherlands.

I had to listen to a prolonged hymn of praise of the Netherlanders, who were such sensible people, and the best friends of the Germans; protestations which did not interest me in the least at that moment. On the contrary, it struck me as deplorable that this man did not say a single word of his own accord about the horrible thing happening close by: the destruction of an entire community! He did not seem to attach any importance to it. . . .

As soon as the "friendly" Netherlander thought that he had swallowed sufficient praise, I began to ask questions about the meaning of that wanton devastation, and why it was inflicted on the population! Before answering, he looked round in a casual manner, as if thinking: "Oh, it's that bit of fire you refer to!" And then exploded in a string of imprecations against the population.

It is a lamentable sign that this German, probably well educated, had not taken the slightest trouble to find out the reason for this wholesale wrecking of a town, that the whole affair impressed him so little. "Somebody" had said that those cursed civilians had been shooting, that explained it to his satisfaction, and gave him ample cause for coarse abuse of the wretched people.

How many soldiers had fallen in consequence of this attack by francs-tireurs he knew not; which troops had witnessed the occurrence he could not say. All he did know was that these troops had left in the morning, leaving a small force behind to impose the punishment.

The bridge-command at the pontoon-bridge near Lixhe allowed me to cross, after requesting me very pressingly to make *very clear* what swine these Belgians were, who fired so treacherously at unsuspecting soldiers, put out the eyes of the wounded, cut off their hands and genitals. When I asked where all these things had happened, the answer was: "Everywhere!" Of course, I promised them to do everything they wanted.

Very large divisions marched from Visé to the pontoon bridge in the direction of Tongres. After the Liège forts had been taken the bridge might be passed in perfect safety. All day long troops came along that road without interruption. I could quite see that the soldiers who were at Visé the previous day, and brought about the conflagration, were gone, for they had left their traces behind. All along the road lay parts of bicycles, shoes, instruments, toys, and so on, everything new and evidently looted from

the shops. Very valuable things were among them, everything crushed and smashed by the cavalry horses, the clumsy munition and forage waggons, or the heavy wheels of the guns.

A little farther on a few houses were left undamaged, because they stood outside the town proper. A woman who had remained in her house stood outside with cigar-boxes under her arm. She offered cigars from an open box to the soldiers of the passing divisions. To me she seemed to be out of her mind, as she stood there trembling, her face distorted from hypernervousness. Her cringing kindness was of no avail, for I noticed a couple of days afterwards that her house too had been totally destroyed.

On the first houses of the town large bills had been stuck, intimating that they were a Netherlander's property, but obviously that had not impressed the tipsy soldiers to any extent, for they had been wrecked all the same for the greater part.

The whole town was like a sea of fire. The Germans, who are nothing if not thorough, even in the matter of arson, had worked out their schème in great detail. In most houses they had poured some benzine or paraffin on the floor, put a lighted match to it, and thrown a small black disc, the size of a farthing, on the burning spot, and then immediately the flames flared up with incredible fury. I do not know the constituents of this particular product of "Kultur."

Nor did I see any inhabitants in the burning town. It was practically impossible to stay in the streets; burning walls and roofs and gutters crashed

down with a great noise, so that the streets were as much on fire as the houses themselves. Only at the crossings were any soldiers to be seen, who, in various stages of intoxication, constantly aimed at the burning houses, and shot everything that tried to escape from the burning stables and barns: pigs, horses, cows, dogs, and so on.

Suddenly I saw a boy about twelve years old in one of the burning streets. He waved his arms, rushed madly to and fro, calling for his father and mother, and his little brother and sisters. He was in danger of perishing in the fire, or being killed by the murderous bullet from a rifle. I ran after him, laid hold of him, and in spite of his resistance pulled him back. Fortunately I met a couple of kind, sober soldiers to whom I told the story, and who promised to send the boy away from the burning town.

Shortly afterwards I met a Netherland Red Cross motor-car. The male nurses, who had met me already on former occasions during the war, recognised me, rushed up to me, and forced me to come with them to the car. Here they tried to explain with a torrential flow of words that I exposed myself to the greatest danger by coming here, as nearly all the soldiers were drunk, shot at every civilian, and so on.

They insisted upon my staying near the car, and be a little safer under the protection of the Red Cross. They told me how they had to drag an old woman out of her house, who refused to come with them, and in her despair shouted nothing but: "Let me die!—let me die!"

I could not say or do anything, for I felt as if

stunned, and let them lead me where they liked; so they gave me a glass of claret, and that revived me.

A few moments after they went away I went also, and entered the burning town once more. A Netherland family lived in Villa Rustica, and I had promised to make inquiries about them.

As I stood there looking at the ruins of what was once so fine a house, a small group of refugees approached, carrying as usual their miserable parcels in which they had hurriedly collected the things that had the least value. As they saw me they shuddered and shivered and crept closer together. Most of them wept and sobbed, and their faces were twisting nervously.

I went up to them and explained that there was no need at all to be afraid of me. They were able to give me news of the inhabitants of Villa Rustica. The owner had died a few days since, from a paralytic stroke, brought on by the emotions caused by the German horrors, whereas madame, who had heroically intervened on behalf of some victims, was probably at St. Hadelin College.

My poor informants had not yet made up their mind where to go, fearing that they might not be permitted to enter The Netherlands as they were without means of subsistence. I assured them, however, that our conception of neighbourly love and charity was different, and that they would be hospitably received.

I showed them the way to Eysden, and they had scarcely started when a cavalry patrol came racing on, the men tipsy and their seat rather unstable. Seeing the refugees, they aimed their rifles at them

and roared "Hands up!" The poor creatures not only put up their hands, but fell on their knees, and muttered incoherent words. The women folded their hands, and stretched them out to the cavalry, as if praying for mercy. The soldiers looked at the scene for a moment, burst out in a harsh laughter, spurred on their horses, and raced on without a word. Two of them stopped near me. I gave them, however, no time for threats, but quickly showed them the old pass to Visé. As soon as they saw the German writing they said: "All right!" and went off.

I came now to the eastern boundary of the town, whence the streets slope gently towards the bank of the Meuse. Here I had an atrociously fantastic view of the burning mass of houses. I fell in with a crowd of dead-drunk soldiers, who first handed my papers on from the one to the other, but as soon as they understood that I was a Netherlander they showed no hostility.

They sang and shouted and waved their arms. Most of them carried bottles full of liquor, which they put to their mouths frequently, smashed them on the ground, or handed them to their comrades, when unable to drink any more themselves. Each of a troop of cavalry had a bottle of pickles, and enjoyed them immensely.

Other soldiers kept on running into the burning houses, carrying out vases, pictures, plate, or small pieces of furniture. They smashed everything on the cobbles and then returned to wreck more things that would have been destroyed by the fire all the same. It was a revelry of drunken vandalism. They

seemed mad, and even risked being burned alive at this work of destruction. Most of the officers were also tipsy; not one of them was saluted by the soldiers.

The beastly scenes which I witnessed in the glaring, scorching heat benumbed me, and I looked on vacantly for a long time. At last I went back and called at St. Hadelin College, the Head of which I had visited already once or twice. The building was still undamaged.

As soon as the Reverend Head, Dr. Frits Goffin, saw me he burst out sobbing, and, taking me by the hand, speechless, he pressed it a long time. I myself also was quite dumb. At length he muttered:

"Could you ever have thought . . . that . . . that . . . such . . . a cruel . . . fate would overwhelm us? What crime did these poor people commit? Have we not given all we had? Have we not strictly obeyed their commands? Have we not done more than they asked for? Have we not charitably nursed their wounded in this House? Oh! they profess deep gratitude to me. But . . . why then? There is nothing left in the House for the aged refugees whom we admitted, for the soldiers we nurse; our doctor has been made a prisoner and taken away, and we are without medical help. This is nothing for the Sisters and myself, but all these unfortunate creatures . . . they must have food. . . ."

The excellent man went on weeping, and I was not able to console him and did not know what to say. He took my arm, and led me to the large common hall, where twenty wounded Germans lay,

who had been hit in the fight for the forts. He went to one bed after the other, and, with tears in his eyes, asked each man how he felt, and inquired, "are you . . . properly . . . cared for . . . here? Are you?" The sick men turned round, their eyes beamed, and they stammered words full of gratitude. Others said nothing, but took the Head's hand and pressed it long and warmly.

The wounded civilians had been put up in the small schoolrooms. Some of them must soon die. Some had burns, but most of them were hit the previous night during the mad outbreak, the mad shooting of the drunken and riotous Germans. In another room a number of old women were crowded together, who had to fly but could not walk all the way to the Netherland frontier.

Near each staircase stood a blackboard on which the Germans had written that to go upstairs was prohibited under penalty of death. The Head explained that the Germans alleged that light signals had been given from the top storey.

Two South-American boys, about twelve years old, had stayed on and heroically assisted the Head at his charitable work. Dr. Goffin was not allowed to take anybody with him except these two children in his search for the wounded, and to bury the dead. It is scarcely credible how courageously these boys of such tender age behaved. Later the Chilean ambassador made inquiries about them and asked for their portraits.

I also met there a compatriot, who had got permission to go to The Netherlands, but declined to

leave. She was Mrs. de Villers, *née* Borret. On August 27th I wrote about her to *De Tijd*:—

"Four days ago her husband was buried. As he was addressing the League of Old-Retraitants at Cherath he was seized by a paralytic stroke, which proved fatal. She has no longer a home, beautiful Villa Rustica being completely burnt out, and now in ruins. But she refuses to return to The Netherlands, as she is still able to be of service to the people here.

"In Cherath she saved the life of a good many. As it was alleged that there had been shooting, the priest, the chaplain, a retired priest, eighty years old, the mayor, and several leading citizens were condemned to be shot. None, not even the priest, was able to defend himself, as they knew not a word of German, and could not make themselves understood. Mrs. de Villers, who speaks German fluently, explained that the spot where the shooting was alleged to have taken place was not part of Cherath at all.

"So this brave lady succeeded in getting the sentence of death withdrawn. But the Germans wanted to torture their wretched prisoners on any or no plea. They were placed near the church wall, kept standing there all night, were told that they would be shot by and by, and threatened by the soldiers with their bayonets.

"In the morning sixty soldiers escorted them out of the village to the hamlet Wandre, where the populace was told they would be shot. Should one shot be fired by one of the inhabitants—thus Mrs. de Villers was told—the prisoners would be shot out of hand; if not, they would be released at Wandre. Mrs. de Villers had, of course, secretly warned the inhabitants in time.

"She hopes to be able to render further services to the populace, thanks to her knowledge of German, and stays on, occupying her time with charitable work. A respectful salute is due to this courageous compatriot."

On the same day I wrote as follows about Dr. Goffin:—

"His face, unshaven since ever so long, is quite emaciated, and presents all the symptoms of nervous exhaustion. Once more twenty German soldiers are being nursed in his college, where only once a German doctor came to see them. He (Dr. Goffin) and a couple of Sisters have to manage everything by themselves, and the Germans do not even dream of providing food for their own wounded, although the college is so inadequately provisioned that the Head and the Sisters have to deny themselves the necessary nourishment that they may feed the wounded.

"And how are they thanked for it?

"The Reverend Head has been notified already ten times that he would be shot, and he is frequently being arrested for alleged shooting from the building. This shooting is actually done by German soldiers alone, who are loafing and looting, as I myself noticed a short time ago. The Head took me to a room where an old man of ninety, who had just re-received the extreme unction, lay dying. By his side sat a broken-hearted little old woman, his wife. This old man had been taken prisoner with other men of Visé, and forced to work at a new bridge. The poor fellow broke down under the strain; it cost him his life."

I left burning Visé deeply impressed by the savage scenes I had witnessed: men turned into beasts by drink, passion, and anger, doing all manner of wrong to the wretched inhabitants; but the impression became deeper by the great contrast: the perfect, charitable devotion of a virtuous priest, a courageous lady, and ever kind and commiserate Sisters. Never have I experienced so many emotions in one day as at Visé.

After taking warm leave of the Head of St. Hadelin College, I continued my walk to the Netherland frontier.

I was scarcely outside the townlet when I met another little group of refugees, probably all members of one family. The mother was being supported by her daughters, all wept, and nervous exhaustion made them totter as they walked. Every moment the mother looked back pitifully at the conflagration which devoured all around, including her slender property, for which she had worked so many years.

From the other side came two soldiers, one of whom she recognised, as he had been billeted on her. Constantly weeping, her face distorted, she sent another glance towards that fiery blaze, looked at the soldier as if reprovingly, hesitated a moment, but then pressed the enemy's hand, sobbing: "Adieu! —adieu!"

Sometimes I felt as if I were dreaming and wanted to call myself back from this nightmare to another, better, and real world. And I thought constantly of the man who, by one word, had given the order for these murders, this arson; the man who severed

husbands and fathers, wives and mothers, and children, who caused so many innocent people to be shot, who destroyed the results of many, many years of strict economy and strenuous industry.

The first acquaintance whom I met on Netherland territory was a Netherland lady married to a Walloon, who kept a large café at Visé. Before the destruction she had asked me, full of anxiety, whether the Germans would indeed carry out their threat and wreck everything. I had comforted her, and answered that I did not think them capable of doing such a thing. Weeping, she came to me, and reminded me of my words. The whole business, in which these young people had invested their slender capital, had been wrecked.

CHAPTER V

FRANCS-TIREURS?

I THINK that there is no better occasion to deal with the question whether there was a franc-tireur-guerilla in Belgium than after the chapter on the destruction of Visé.

My opinion on the matter is still the same as when I first wrote about it to *De Tijd,* and in *Vrij België;* and from my own personal knowledge and after mixing with the people I consider the allegation that the Belgians acted as francs-tireurs an absolute lie.

Some uphold the accusation on the ground of expressions in Belgian newspapers, collected in a German pamphlet. In my opinion these quotations have not the slightest value. Everyone will understand this who thinks of the excitement of journalists, whose country was suddenly and quite unexpectedly involved in a terrible war, and who felt now that as journalists they had to perform a great, patriotic duty. In their nervous, over-excited condition they sat at their desk and listened to the gossip of refugees about civilians taking part in the struggle. In their imagination they saw hordes of barbarians overrun their native soil, saw man and man, woman

and woman, shoulder to shoulder, resisting the invader without regard for their own life. The thoughts of such journalists, whose very own country had been at war now for a few days, were not on severe logical lines; they found a certain beauty in that picture, and I can quite understand how some came to believe in it as a reality, and gloried in it.

That is not evidence however, for how did they get the information? From my own experience I make bold to say with the greatest confidence that these reports came from German sources only, whereas there was not any ground for them.

I have witnessed all the people during the very earliest days of the war. I came to Liège, passing between the forts, as described already. I was in Lixhe when the pontoon bridge was wrecked repeatedly by Fort Pontisse; I stayed at Visé three times before the destruction began, and I was there when the charming townlet was wrecked by fire; and in Louvain I have been dragged from my bed by six soldiers and arrested, when the whole town was still ablaze.

Very well, I have:

1. Never seen anything of a franc-tireur-guerilla.
2. Never seen anyone who was arrested as a franc-tireur.
3. Never heard any German soldier, of whatever rank, assert that he himself had witnessed any action by a franc-tireur, although I questioned such soldiers times without number. They always mentioned others, who had left days ago, and were said to have gone through the miserable experience!

4. Never heard the *name* of any franc-tireur in answer to my questions.

But they were *always* German officers and no others who talked about francs-tireurs, and at Visé, Liège, Dinant, Bilsen, and particularly at Louvain, they constantly pressed me and tried to make me promise that I should write to *De Tijd* about francs-tireurs and justify the devastations. These stories emanated from the officers and permeated the rank and file; and the men grew fearfully angry with the Belgians, whom they cursed and abused. It also made the soldiers terribly afraid of francs-tireurs, and I noticed many a time that some loud sound from a falling wall, for example, made a whole troop of soldiers jump up, lay hold of their rifles, and hide themselves in an absolute "blue funk." The mere noise made them curse and rage and talk of nothing but burning houses.

In the end these stories of the soldiers convinced even the inhabitants that there had been francs-tireurs, but never in the place where they lived, always somewhere else. They could not believe that the Germans could be so cruel and wreck so much property if nothing at all had happened; and when at length the time came that they themselves were obliged to fly, many of them believed that their compatriots who *elsewhere* acted as francs-tireurs were to blame for all the dire calamities. But if they had had my opportunity to go "elsewhere" and gather information there, they would have been convinced of the untruth, and probably would have heard the name of their own village as

the scene of the occurrence. That was how rumours and reports got about.

Many soldiers, probably most of them, were undoubtedly of good faith, and *believed* what they related; but the damnable notion had been put into their heads by their superiors. That is why I do not consider it impossible that *some* places were wrecked on account of *alleged* acts by francs-tireurs.

I have explained already in the chapter "Round about Liège" that I myself was duped occasionally, for example, by the story of the three hundred civilians who had been shot. To my mind these violent acts at the beginning of the war were part and parcel of the system of frightfulness, by which the Germans tried to scare the population and indirectly the hostile armies, at the same time rousing their own soldiers to anger and fury.

That mad fury was also intensified considerably by the accusations about gruesome mutilations committed on German soldiers by Belgians, who were said to have cut off the noses, ears, genitals, and so on of their enemies. These rumours were so persistent that in the end it was generally believed in neutral countries that these things had happened frequently.

No little astonishment was therefore created by an interview which I published with Dr. van der Goot of The Hague, who did so much excellent work in the Red Cross Hospital at Maastricht. He also had come to believe all these stories, and as everybody always mentioned a large hospital in Aix-la-Chapelle, which was said to be full of similarly mutilated soldiers, Dr. van der Goot went to

that town to see for himself. The chief medical officer of that hospital in a conversation stated that not one single case of that sort had been treated in his institution nor in any of the other local hospitals where he was a visiting physician. At a meeting of the medical circle just lately held he had not heard one word, nor had any one colleague, about the treatment of similar cases.

In Louvain I was myself arrested, because a more than half-drunk soldier had accused me of spying and arson! There too I had to listen to all sorts of abuse because I was a franc-tireur. And in spite of all this they tried to extract a promise from me to write against the francs-tireurs!

The history of the destruction of Visé affords also interesting support to my opinion, as previously expressed, that the violent actions of the Germans took place according to a fully thought-out design.

During the early days of the war the papers published a report, of German origin, that Visé had been destroyed because francs-tireurs had appeared. I was therefore not a little amazed when, arriving there on August 8th, I found the townlet entirely undamaged, and even the German military admitted that they had not heard a word about francs-tireurs.

But the inhabitants were treated even then in a most vexatious manner, and on August 14th (the destruction came about on the 16th) I wrote to *De Tijd* (No. 20457) :—

"Visé is under a real reign of terror. The day before yesterday the town-crier walked the streets with his bell, and announced that within twenty-four hours

everyone had to deliver his bicycle at the bridge. Anyone in whose house a bicycle should be found would be shot and his house set on fire. Yesterday morning the Germans announced once more that all arms, including those that were old or damaged or taken to pieces, should be handed in at the town-hall within an hour. If any arms should be found anywhere after that, they would shoot the inhabitants and burn down the town. Eatables and drinkables were requisitioned continuously under threats of firing the town, and the inhabitants are afraid of nothing so much as of the possibility that something may be required some day or other that cannot be produced."

Even before that, on August 11th I sent a communication, by post or cable (*De Tijd,* No. 20353), in which the following is found:—

"In and round about Visé people sleep in their cellars, as they are threatened frequently that the town will be set on fire."

Anyone who, like myself, has been able to see in what frame of mind the people were during the first days of the German occupation, cannot believe it possible that they would even think of taking up arms. They lived in an unending terror, tried to forestall the invader's demands, and, if anything was requisitioned, they searched each other's houses to see whether anything was kept back and all the demanded bottles of gin or claret were forthcoming. There was not one who did not keep his door open as widely as possible to prove his complete sub-

missiveness, and to let the Germans enter his house at any time to check what was to be found there. Every moment I saw men or women run into the street offering cigars to the soldiers from open boxes, smiling nervously and desperately, trying to behave as unconcernedly as possible. During those early days payment for refreshments was accepted hardly anywhere, and people often refused to accept money from me, because they mistook me for a German.

Men and young women in the prime of life sat whole days in a chair, or lay abed, because in the most literal sense of the word they were unable to stand on their feet for fear and terror, caused by the incessant menaces.

And during these first days of the war I had not met a single person who was able to settle down quietly in the existing circumstances, not a single person in whom anger and fury subdued fear and terror.

Is it thinkable that persons in that frame of mind would take up arms and invite the enemy's revenge upon themselves and those near and dear to them, a revenge of which they were so mortally afraid?

And supposing for a moment that the allegations made by the Germans were true, that there had been shooting at Visé for example, then one might perhaps consider the revenge justifiable, but should also expect that they would punish with a heavy heart, conscious that they were inflicting a necessary evil.

Of a heavy heart, however, there was not a trace. In the previous chapter I described how beastly they behaved during the destruction of Visé; how

the soldiers drank immoderate quantities of alcohol, and then jeered at the wretched refugees; how they indulged in unmitigated vandalism, and wrecked by hand things of which they knew that by and by would be destroyed by fire.

Children and old people perished in consequence of the cruel heartlessness of the Germans, and in St. Hadelin College they robbed their own wounded of medical help and surgical appliances.

This happened not only at Visé, but also at other places which I visited, more especially at Louvain. And those who read the following chapters carefully will find sufficient support for my opinion, that *Belgium is innocent of the base charges and allegations uttered by Germany, which country soiled its conscience still worse, first by plunging the little kingdom into the direst misery, and then by accusing it falsely of crimes which it never committed.*

CHAPTER VI

WITH THE FLEMINGS

BETWEEN my tours through the Liège district I made a trip in the direction of Tongres, because I wanted to know what had become of all those Germans who had crossed the Meuse near Lixhe. It was remarkable to notice how friendly the Flemings of that district behaved with regard to the Germans. Although they criticised the violation of the country's neutrality sharply, and every family was proud of the sons who had taken up arms in defence of their Fatherland, yet they judged quite kindly the German soldiers who passed through their district. I often heard expressions full of pity toward those men, who could not help themselves, but were compelled to do whatever their superiors commanded them.

The Germans did themselves great injury undoubtedly by their vulgar and barbarous demeanour, for that lost them every claim on the sympathy of the people.

They behaved tolerably well during the first few days after the occupation of Tongres; but that did not last long, and soon they began here also to commit atrocious acts of terrorism. One evening

at about the middle of August several civilians were killed, a dozen houses along the road to Maastricht were fired, and in the town the windows of several shops smashed, which was followed by general looting. That lost them whatever sympathy they might have met with in the district.

On August 12th I came for the first time to Tongres. They had been there only a few days, and only near the town-hall did I see a goodly number of the garrison. Many wounded were brought there, and carried in through the door under the outside stairway. They came from Haelen, where a battle was being fought that afternoon and for which they had left in the morning. For the attack on the entrenched Belgians they had used cavalry exclusively, who were simply mowed down by the murderous fire from the hidden mitrailleuses and the infantry fire from the trenches. The Germans suffered a great reverse, and were deeply embittered.

Just outside Tongres I met a fleet of Red Cross cars loaded with wounded. Cavalry escorted them. I was stopped and ordered to go back, as they expected the Belgians to attack Tongres.

I thought the result of the battle of Haelen rather important, and should have liked to have wired it immediately to my paper. Until now I had always gone on foot, that being the only conveyance which the Germans could not seize. But this time I preferred a bicycle, as the only way to get to The Netherlands on that same day. So I tried at a couple of bicycle-shops to get a second-hand one for love and money. At the first shop I asked:—

"I suppose, madame, that you have an old 'bike' to sell?"

She looked me up and down suspiciously, and then said:

"No, I've none to sell."

I did not fare better at the next. There the answer was:

"I refuse to sell 'bikes' to Germans."

"But, madame, I am not German; I am a Netherlander. I should . . ."

"I can hear quite well that you are German, and if you were a Netherlander you would not venture on a bike at this moment. If you come here to seize my bikes, I'll deliver them, for I cannot do anything against that, but I refuse to sell them of my own free-will."

The dear lady rapped it out in such a decided tone of voice that I desisted. I told my trouble to the proprietor of a café where I took a glass of beer; he, examining my papers, placed confidence in me, and got me a rickety thing, for which I paid twenty-two francs.

After all, this was better than walking, so I decided to make a small detour, go once more to Liège, and see how the forts were. I lost my way in a maze of by-roads, and got at last back to the main road near Jupille, where I met a patrol of Uhlans, who came in my direction at a trot.

Already from a distance with much fuss they signalled to me to stop, and of course I obeyed at once. Two men dismounted, came to me in a perfect rage, and, without asking who I was or what I was doing, cut my tyres to pieces in several

places; they abused me with wild gesticulations and threats, jumped on their horses, and rode off. I dragged my wretched vehicle with its stabbed tyres a little distance, but then met a second patrol, who showed still greater indignation, and destroyed it altogether.

For the rest of the journey I used my only remaining means of transport, my legs, and after a walk of some hours got to the frontier of The Netherlands near Oud-Vroenhoven. A Netherland custom-house officer asked for my papers, and I showed him my huge passport. The man looked at the sheet critically, and made out that I could not possibly be a Netherlander, as I was the holder of a "foreign" passport.

My "foreign" passport was, of course, in French, of which language the man evidently knew not a word. Although I explained that this passport was the best one could get in The Netherlands, that I had paid six guilders and seventy-five cents for it, that I was a war-correspondent of *De Tijd,* it was all useless. I had to go with him to the guard-house, and the man kept the queer passport—the damning piece of evidence—firmly in his hand. All the inquisitive loafers, of which the frontier was full during those days, followed me, and so we went in procession to the guard-house, at some distance from the frontier. I heard all sorts of discussions behind me, and constantly caught words like: German, boche, deserter, franc-tireur, spy, and other complimentary niceties.

As soon as I had entered the guard-house a soldier, rifle in hand, mounted guard. The cus-

tom-house officer handed my French passport to a lieutenant, who scrutinised it closely. Then followed the examination:

"You are a journalist?"

"Yes, sir."

"On which paper?"

"*De Tijd,* sir; here is my press-card."

"Where is *De Tijd* printed?"

"In Amsterdam. . . ."

"In which street?"

"Well . . .! The Nieuwe Zijds Voorburgwal."

"All right; you may go!"

Having pushed my way through the loafers, who stood waiting before the house, I was able to continue my journey to Maastricht.

A few days later I had to go to Canne, a Belgian hamlet near the frontier, south of Maastricht. In the evening of August 18th an atrociously barbarous crime had been committed there, a cool-blooded murder. At Canne live some good, kind Flemings, who would not hurt a fly. The kind-hearted burgomaster had, moreover, tried for days to comfort his fellow-citizens, and was for ever saying:

"Leave everything to me; I'll invite them to have a glass of wine with me, and you will see then that they are kind people."

This he had done. Already for many days he had treated several officers to his best claret.

Tuesday night, August 18th, at about 11 o'clock, a train of luggage carts passed through Canne, and in the village the Browning of one of the soldiers in the last van went off suddenly. This was the

signal for all Germans to start shooting indiscriminately, anywhere, at anything, happily without hitting anybody. A few tipsy soldiers went to the burgomaster's house, and no sooner had his wife opened the door for the barbarians, when a shot was fired, the bullet passing through the unfortunate lady's head into the wall opposite the door. I was there early the next morning and saw the hole. It is evident that the soldiers ill-treated the dead lady with their rifles in a horrible manner, for a large part of the wall was spattered over with blood.

After having murdered the burgomaster's wife, the villains attacked a guest, Mr. Derricks, a lawyer, and member of the Provincial States, whom they killed with a bayonet. His wife broke a leg when she tried to fly to the cellar.

Mr. Derricks lived at Roelanche, but with his wife and seven children had fled for security to Canne, where he was hospitably received in Mr. Poswick's, the burgomaster's, house.

When I got to the house everything was in a frightful state. A pair of curtains showed traces of fire; cupboards had been emptied, and nearly all the china and glass broken; statuary lay broken on the floor; windows were smashed; bits of bricks and plaster from the ceilings, through which many shots had been fired, completed the scene of destruction. On the doorstep I picked up a cartridge-case, which I have always kept, because it is highly probable that it had contained the bullet which killed Mrs. Poswick.

This terrible tragedy took place at scarcely six yards from the Netherland frontier, for the burgo-

master's house stands by a road half Belgian and half Netherland. The Netherland soldiers who were doing frontier-duty on the latter part had to fly from the mad shooting of the Germans. They hid behind a wall that was quickly full of bullet-holes. The German soldiers spent a considerable time guzzling the burgomaster's wine, which they looted, and afterwards went off in the direction of Tongres.

It was stated later on that the German authorities punished the culprits and had them executed at Aix-la-Chapelle; *De Tijd* of August 31st, 1914, also reported it. But the action of these soldiers was not worse than that of generals who had entire cities destroyed and civilians killed by the hundred, but were always screened by the German Government.

. . . . . .

On Thursday, August 20th, I decided to go once more in the direction of Tongres. As the Germans had picketed the main road along the Netherland frontier, made a detour and dragged my bicycle across the mountain near Petit Laney, a very trying job in the stifling heat. From the mountain top I had a beautiful vista, which enabled me to see that near Riemst a large German force was encamped at which I desired to have a look. So I walked down the hill to Canne, where some crofters were trying to get their cattle into The Netherlands. These poor creatures, who usually own two or three head of cattle, had been compelled already to give up half of their stock. From Canne I cut through corn and beetroot fields to the road to Riemst. The first German sentinels were tolerably friendly.

"Ah, so you are a Netherlander, aren't you?

Then we are friends. The Netherlands remains neutral, does she not? What news have you from there; are you already at war with Britain?"

These and similar questions were asked after a superficial examination of my papers, and, having answered them, I was allowed to go on. But at a certain moment an officer appeared, who summoned me to dismount, and asked for my papers. After a short examination he ordered a soldier to take me to the commanding officer at Riemst.

The attitude of all the soldiers changed immediately; they looked at me with angry eyes, and from time to time I heard hostile remarks. Whenever I did not walk quickly enough or turned a little to the right or the left, my escort pulled me roughly by the arm. All the same I took the case as coolly as possible, fully convinced that the commanding officer would release me after a superficial examination.

At Riemst, the soldier took, or rather pummelled me into a large farm-house, and soon I faced the bigwigs, who had made themselves as comfortable as possible in a large room. Several pictures and engravings lay on the ground in pieces, whilst numerous full and empty wine-bottles indicated that they had abundantly worshipped at the shrine of Bacchus, and intended to go on with the cult. The higher officers and the subalterns seemed to be frantically busy; at least they had violent discussions with many gesticulations over a map. The soldier reported that he had brought me here by order of Lieutenant Such—I did not catch the name—and then it began:

"Who are you?"

"I am . . ."

"What do you want here—what are you here for?"

"I am a Netherland jour . . ."

"What! A Netherlander? I suppose you come to see how many troops are here, don't you? And then . . ."

"Please be good enough to have a look at my papers, and then . . ."

"Papers? Papers? Yes, of course you all have papers; all those villains who shot at our men at Visé come back from The Netherlands with papers, in order to start afresh. Later on I'll have a look at that stuff. Here, lock him up for the present."

He pointed to a couple of soldiers, and they laid hold of me. They took me to a small room, where I was astonished to find two soldiers with revolvers guarding a priest and a peasant. As soon as the door was closed behind me I wished to chat with my fellow-prisoners, for even in prison I was not oblivious of my journalistic duties. But they seemed not at all anxious to have anything to do with me, and I soon understood the reason why. At each question they threw timid glances at the two watch-dogs, and I saw that fear of these made them withhold all information. However, after a good deal of trouble I got to know that the priest was the parish priest, and his companion in misery the burgomaster. They had been taken as hostages, and would suffer punishment for acts the villagers might eventually commit against the German usurpers. I contented myself with this, as I felt

that in the circumstances further questions might make things awkward for these two men.

What might happen next? Sitting on a chair in a corner of the room I began to consider my position. For the moment it was not agreeable, but by and by those officers might find time to look at my papers. The only thing I bothered about was a map marked with the places where, according to the latest news, the German and French armies were. I kept it in an inside coat-pocket, and it might be found if they should search me.

I spent three hours in the small room with my silent companions. At last I was called, and appeared once more before the casual court-martial.

"Very well, now give me those papers."

Having got them, several officers examined my credentials, and their faces showed that the horizon was a little clearer for me.

"Oh, you are a journalist? And what came you here for?"

"Well, sir, I wanted to follow, as far as the German Authorities desire to allow it, the movements of the German armies, in order to give reliable information to the Netherland public, who take a great interest in your progress."

"Indeed! And did you take notes already? Just let me have a look."

The turn things took now was not quite to my liking, and I did not feel very safe when I handed him my scribbling-pad.

"I cannot read a word of it! Can you read it at all yourself? Yes? Oh, but I cannot understand it. Translate some of it."

That was a relief! I began to translate, taking the liberties to which every translator is entitled. And I succeeded in making a favourable impression by censoring my own manuscript.

"Well, that is right enough. But, mind, don't say in your paper that you found troops here, and especially avoid telling which troops."

"Very well, sir."

"Nor must you tell them that we detained you here. That was really not our intention at all, but just now we had no time to examine your papers."

"All right, sir."

"And what is the news in The Netherlands about the war?"

"Well, sir, not much beyond what you are sure to know already: that Japan declared war against Germany; that the Russians invaded Germany; that the French gained some important victories in Alsace; that the German fleet lost some ships . . ."

"Oh, bosh! Stop it! These are, of course, all lies from Reuter; they did not come from Wolff. Japan is not going to declare war against us; much rather against Russia!"

"Oh, but, sir, Wolff confirmed these reports."

"Oh no! That is impossible, and, after all, we are not afraid of Japan either. You had better write in your paper that we are not afraid of anything excepting Montenegro. And you may also inform your readers that it is better for Netherlanders not to cross the frontier, as we are going to apply much stricter measures. For we have evidence that those people from Visé and other villages

who fled to The Netherlands are returning with forged papers, in order to shoot at us. And now you may go, but back to Maastricht at once."

"But will you then please give me a pass, otherwise I may be detained again on my way back."

"Oh yes! You may have that!"

And the commanding officer gave me a pass, on which this very same colonel who had prohibited me to write in my paper what troops were at Riemst, put a stamp on that pass, which contained the German eagle, and besides this the words: "Royal Prussian 8, Reserve Infantry Regiment, II Battalion." This confirmed what the rumours said, that the troops who had passed through Visé and other places during the last days and committed those atrocities there, were the reserves which had been called up, among whom discipline is less strict than among the younger men, who arrived in these districts during the earlier days.

Although I had been commanded to return "at once" to Maastricht, I succeeded in having a chat here and there with the inhabitants of Riemst. I had visited the village about eight days ago, but what a change! Then the people assured me that "die Duutschen" [1] were not so bad after all, that they were compelled to do their duty, and were kind to the inhabitants if these were kind to them.

And at present? Every word expressed hate, profound hate, hardly controlled. They trembled all over when they spoke in deep, inspiring voices about "die Duutschen." [1]

Everything of value had been stolen from them:

[1] See note on page 1.

horses, cows, sheep, carts, bicycles, everything, everything!—only in some cases payment was made with tickets, which might be cashed after the war. During the night the German soldiers slept in the rooms, but the inhabitants—men, women, children, babies and sick persons—they locked in barns and cellars, which they boarded up.

I was not allowed to return by bicycle, and left it at a café at the crossing of the roads to Tongres and Riemst. A couple of days later the Germans had already abstracted the tyres.

The road to The Netherlands was strewn over with empty wine-bottles.

CHAPTER VII

LIÈGE AFTER THE OCCUPATION

NEXT day I was already back in Liège, where much was changed after my last visit. The Germans went on terrorising the inhabitants, and these, being extremely frightened, looked with suspicion at every stranger. In the streets was the smoke of burning houses, especially from Outre-Meuse.

In every quarter I met Belgian refugees from the south, and Netherlanders who wanted to escape to their safe native country. The Liège people themselves were not allowed to leave.

Nearly every hour another proclamation was posted; and this made the people still more nervous. One of them brought the information that the province of Liège had to pay a war-tax of fifty million francs. Another forbade the people to be out in the streets after six o'clock p.m.; the doors must remain open, the windows show the lights. Burning and shooting were threatened if any more arms should be found, and all houses were to be searched.

Many shops were closed on account of lack of stock, as everything had been requisitioned, and as yet no traffic was allowed to bring in fresh provi-

sions. All this bother made the inhabitants discontented, but frightened them at the same time; they grumbled and whispered, and looked about with malicious, flaming eyes, but in mortal fear.

Labourers were called up to assist in reinforcing the conquered forts on the left bank of the Meuse, the forts which by and by might be used to shell their fellow-countrymen, in case the Germans should be forced to retire. Nobody will have offered himself for this work voluntarily, the less so as the proclamation wound up as follows:—

"Des ouvriers volontaires seront embauchés à partir du 21 Août sur la rive gauche de la Meuse, où on fera connaître les conditions détaillées":

("Voluntary workmen will be enrolled from August 21st on the left bank of the Meuse, where details of the conditions will be made known.")

The streets and squares where the high military officers had established themselves were closed by cordons of soldiers, and nobody was allowed to pass them.

The town was entirely shut off from war- and other news.

I informed a few priests of the Pope's death, which had been known in The Netherlands for several days. They knew nothing about it, and asked whether I had any proof by me. I gave them *De Tijd* printed with a black border, and armed with this document they went to communicate the sad news to the Right Reverend Rutten, bishop of Liège.

I also brought consternation to the nunnery at

which my cousin lives by this same report of the Holy Father's demise; and the good dear Sisters roamed through the passages, wringing their hands and repeating: "Le Pape est mort!—le Pape est mort!" ("The Pope is dead!")

I met a doctor at this nunnery, who told me highly important news, but in whispers, because in these days "even walls have ears": the Allies had gained great victories over the Germans. As he saw by the expression of my face that I did not believe off-hand all he told, he became still more impressive in manner, and produced a paper, from which he recited:—

"Great German defeat at Libramont—nine thousand prisoners taken."

"In Alsace the French are near the Rhine."

"The Russians advanced fifty miles into East Prussia."

In the same way the list went on for a goodly length, and he became actually angry when even then I refused to believe everything. He was especially pleased with the account of the victory near Libramont. He had a friend, also a physician, who had been compelled by the Germans to go with them in the medical service, and this friend had told him this himself. It was remarkable that educated, superior persons could become so narrow-minded in times like these, and believed anything simply because they hoped that it might be true.

The town was full of soldiers, and I had great trouble to find lodgings. "Tout est pris par les Allemands" ("Everything is taken by the Ger-

mans") was the answer I got everywhere, with the result that I was still hunting for a bedroom after six o'clock, although nobody was then allowed in the streets. I was stopped at every turn, and after explaining my case got a hint to hurry up.

At last I found an hotel, where I could have a small garret, against which arrangement I had not the slightest objection in the circumstances. The café downstairs looked rather peculiar, with a great number of looking-glasses, and ladies with powdered faces. These seemed not averse to closer relations with me, but when I pretended not to understand a single word of French, they soon gave it up, and showed no further desire for my friendship. But I could see quite well that they discussed the question whether I was a German officer or a spy?

I went to bed early, for that day I had again walked from Maastricht to Liège. My little bedroom was quite in the roof of the house, and had evidently been used by a servant.

About midnight I was roused by an infernal noise in the street. People yelled and screamed most fearfully, and I heard rifle-shots also.

I felt not the slightest inclination to go and see what was the matter, but I stretched myself and yawned, feeling much more tired after a couple of hours' rest than when I went to bed. The uproar went on, and suddenly I thought that I also heard a hubbub in the café downstairs. And, really, it came ever nearer. People rushed up and down the stairs, screamed and yelled, doors were banged, in short it was as if they were pulling down the house.

Very sleepy, I went on listening . . . listening . . . probably until I fell asleep again, for I cannot remember what happened after.

I woke up in the morning, and when going downstairs saw that the doors of all the rooms stood open, and everything inside was in great disorder. In the café tables and chairs were overturned, and broken looking-glasses lay on the floor. The front door was also open, and I walked away.

And now the explanation? During the night the Germans had started house-to-house searches, and wherever the doors were not opened quickly enough, the soldiers began to shoot. The inhabitants were then driven into the street amid loud screams and cries. It was also said that some persons had been shot.

By what accident had I not been disturbed? The height, perhaps, at which my miserable little garret-room was situated.

The hotel where I stayed that night was called *Hôtel de la Paix;* an hotel of peace, indeed!

CHAPTER VIII

LOUVAIN DESTROYED

As soon as I heard about the horrors that took place at Louvain, I hastened to try and get there to find out, if possible, by personal observation the truth of the numberless conflicting stories that would undoubtedly grow up from the facts. I expected that the situation round about the town would be rather critical, and decided to proceed cautiously. It is rather a long stretch of nearly forty-five miles, but I succeeded in getting to Louvain in the afternoon.

The road itself had prepared me already in some degree for the horrors I should find there. All the villages through which I passed, excepting Tongres and the townlets of St. Trond, Borgloon, and Tirlemont, were for the greater part burned down or shelled into ruins. The German troops, who had been stoutly resisted during their march through St. Trond and Tirlemont, had attacked in a great rage the civilian population. They set the houses on fire and aimed their rifles at the terror-stricken civilians who fled from them. The men were nearly all killed, but women and children were shot as well.

On the road from Borgloon to Thienen I had a chat with an old crone, who stood weeping by the ruins of her miserable little cottage, which she refused to leave. This little house, which strenuous zeal had enabled her to buy, was all she possessed on earth besides her two sons, both fallen through the murderous lead of those barbarians, and buried in the little garden at the back of their ruined home. Of another family, living close by, the father and two sons were murdered in the same way.

Between Thienen and Louvain I met endless trains of refugees, exactly like those I had seen already near Visé, Liège, and other places. These also carried their wretched bundles, and children and young people did their utmost to encourage and support their elders on their arduous path. All these people saluted me in a cringing, timid manner, nodding smilingly and taking off their caps already from afar.

I saw some extremely poor people, very old and stiff, to whom walking was nearly impossible. A Bavarian soldier escorted them. He had his rifle slung across his back and in both hands carried the luggage of the unfortunate creatures. He seemed to have come a long way already, for he looked tired, and the perspiration ran down his face. Although it is only natural to assist one's fellow-creatures, this scene touched me, for hitherto I had seen the Germans commit rough, inhuman deeds only.

I noticed the smell of fire already several miles from Louvain. On both sides of the road small mounds indicated the graves of soldiers who fell

during the brave resistance of the Belgians before Louvain. A small wooden cross and some pieces of accoutrement were the only decorations. Carcases of horses were lying in the fields, from which came a disagreeable smell.

The town was on fire, and ruddy smoke hovered over it. Deserted like a wilderness, not a soul moved in the streets. The first street I entered was the Rue de la Station. Large, imposing mansions used to stand here, but the devouring fire consumed even the last traces of former greatness.

All houses were on fire, and every now and then walls fell down with a roar of thunder, shrouding the greater part of the street in a thick cloud of suffocating smoke and dust. Sometimes I had to run to escape from the filthy mass. On several walls an order was written in chalk directing the men to come to the market-place to assist in extinguishing the fire, and the women to stay indoors. As soon as the order had been obeyed the Germans drove the men from the market to the station, where they were packed in trucks like cattle.

Farther on in the Rue de la Station lay nine rotting carcases of horses, the intestines oozing from the bodies, and a greasy substance was poured over their skin. The stench was unbearable and made breathing nearly impossible, which compelled me to jump on my bicycle and escape as quickly as possible from the pestilential surroundings.

The sun was already setting, and became still redder, making still more abominable and more infernal the glare of the burning town. Nobody moved about in this abode of death.

I roamed about aimlessly in a scorching heat. Whither? I did not know myself. I did not know Louvain and met nobody whom I might ask something. I came near a couple of streets that were only ruins; the walls collapsed against each other and filled the roadway with rubbish, so that sometimes I could not see whether I walked on or beside the place where the houses used to stand.

Bicycling was of course out of the question; I shouldered my bicycle and stepped across the glowing cinders, which singed my soles. One spot could still be recognised as a street corner. Three soldiers emerged there suddenly and aimed at me with their rifles.

I explained who I was, and was then allowed to come nearer. They were drunk, and with glassy eyes talked about francs-tireurs, the friendship Germans felt for Netherlanders, and so on. One of them entered the still burning corner house and returned with three bottles of wine, one a bottle of Champagne; corks were drawn and one of the bottles handed to me. First I said that I never took wine, then that the doctor had forbidden it; it was of no use. The fellow who held the bottle in front of me got nasty, and shouted:

"If you don't drink with us you are not our friend." At the same time he beat the ground with his rifle-butt and, willy-nilly, I had to drink.

Suddenly several shots sounded in the neighbourhood. The three took their rifles and looked round, somewhat scared. They assured me that they would protect me. If there had been occasion for it, it would have been against their own comrades, for

a troop of soldiers came sailing along, swinging about their rifles and shooting at the burning houses as they walked on, without rhyme or reason, anyhow and anywhere. These were drunk also. At last I was able to shake off my "friends," and got through another street into the market-place, at the town-hall and St. Peter's Church. The beautiful town-hall happily was not destroyed, as the first reports intimated, but St. Peter's had been damaged most cruelly. The spire had disappeared, the roof collapsed, windows broken, the altar burned, the pulpit badly damaged, and so forth. The two last-named parts were fine works of art.

For the rest most houses in the market-place were on fire. Soldiers were billeted on one of the corner houses, and I was of course detained there, but released again, after having been requested to show up the francs-tireurs. I had to consider also where I might pass the night in this burning city? I asked an officer's consent to stay the night with the soldiers. He gave his permission if I could get the consent of the commanding officer, whom I might find at the station; he told me that he was sure to grant it.

Before I got there I passed the Halls of Louvain, the building that contained the world-famous library, with its numerous art-treasures. Only the outer walls were left standing, inside it was all ruins. All was reduced to dust, to miserable rubbish, and never will one single page be recovered of all those thousands of burned manuscripts.

I was greatly astonished to see a little old man sitting by his house, while all those in the neighbour-

hood were burning. His own dwelling had escaped without much damage, and was only hit by rifle bullets. He told me that his family had fled, his son with wife and all children but one, a small boy. At length he left also, but had lost his way outside the town, and returned to his house, where the Germans "allowed" him to remain. I considered that I might after all sleep better in that house than yonder among the soldiers, and asked the little man whether he would put me up for the night. He did not object at all; but in spite of my pressing, he refused absolutely to accept any payment.

"But," he said, "but perhaps you brought some bread with you to eat on the road, and I should like to have a piece of that . . . not for myself . . . but for my grandchild; we had nothing to eat all day long, and the little boy is so . . . is so hungry."

The poor man wept, and, although I had taken with me no more than two pieces of bread-and-butter, which I had not touched yet, I could not bear the sight of these poor, hungry things, and handed over to them my food.

As I passed a Red Cross Hospital, partly spared, I noticed a Flemish doctor, who first looked at me from the door held ajar, and then came nearer; a strapping young fellow with a black beard. After I had made myself known as a Netherlander, he was clearly surprised, and it seemed as though he had a lot to ask or to tell. I expected to hear a torrent of abuse against the Huns, who had destroyed everything, and murdered so many innocent

people, or a lament about the valuable treasures of the library, which also had not been spared; but no, other thoughts occupied his mind. With a slightly trembling voice he asked:

"Ah well, you come from The Netherlands; tell me whether it is true that you have let the Germans through, allowing them to ravish us? Tell me whether this is true?"

The man became quite excited, and took hold of my sleeve. He looked me straight in the face, as if he wanted to find out by the expression of my eyes whether I spoke the truth. I could easily stand the scrutinising look, for I knew too well how utterly false those suspicions were. So I replied with great emphasis:

"I know that those rumours have been spread about, but also that they were contradicted by Belgian officials. I know also, and can affirm it from my own personal observation, that there is not a single word of truth in those accusations, for I passed the early days of the war in the district where the fight was going on."

The good man's face became quite cheerful, he grasped my hand, deeply moved, and, pressing it warmly, said:

"Ah, well, I am sincerely glad to hear that. You cannot believe what awful sorrow it gave us, Flemings, when we heard that the Netherlanders were conspiring with the Germans."

The doctor now became more communicative on other matters. According to him the Germans contended that the inhabitants had been shooting from windows and cellars, in order to prevent the garri-

son from assisting their comrades, who were fighting a battle against the Belgians at a distance of about four miles and a half from the town. Such an organised action of the inhabitants, under the tyrannical rule of the Germans during the eight days before the destruction, he called impossible, and therefore the whole accusation absurd. At any rate they had felt that the destruction was coming, and had been planned systematically, for during those eight days the Germans had plundered the population, and taken from them all bread, even what they required to feed themselves.

To avenge this alleged shooting by civilians the fires had been kindled in the houses, maxims placed in the streets, women and children beaten, men imprisoned or murdered.

The discovery by the Germans of so-called depôts of Belgian rifles, each rifle labelled with the name of a citizen, was a gigantic "misunderstanding." Already before the Germans occupied the town the burgomaster had issued an order that all arms should be delivered. The inhabitants had obeyed, and the rifles were provided with a card, so that each might be returned to the lawful owner after the war. This collection of arms has been used by the Germans as evidence of an organised revolt of the citizens.

When I told the doctor that I had to go to the station, he explained to me how I could get there without walking across red hot cinders, and I followed his advice. I walked through quarters which used to be the pride of the city, but were now turned into heaps of rubbish.

They made also sad havoc of the Boulevard de Namur. Many mansions of the aristocracy had been destroyed and many people killed. There were corpses still lying on the Boulevard as I passed, all in a state of decay. The smell was unbearable and the sight loathsome, especially when I saw several drunken soldiers insulting the bodies of these unfortunate people.

In the flowerbeds in front of the station many corpses had been buried, especially those of soldiers who had been killed in the fight near Louvain. The station itself was well guarded, but, thanks to my passport and resolute manner, I gained admission and was finally ushered into the presence of the man who is responsible for the destruction of Louvain, Von Manteuffel.

I had expected to meet a terrible creature, but must admit that he was as kind as possible. As soon as he had learned from my papers that I was a Netherland journalist, he jumped up and stood in the attitude as though he saw in me the personification of the Kaiser. He already probably felt the pangs of remorse, and now wanted to try and justify himself as far as possible in the eyes of the public.

He stated that the cause of the destruction was the necessity of punishment, because Belgian soldiers in civilian dress had stayed behind in Louvain, waiting to attack the German army from behind at the first favourable opportunity. They thought that their chance had come when for a short time the German troops had to be withdrawn from the fortified camp of Antwerp to take their share in a

fight near Louvain. Von Manteuffel thought that by attacking the troops in the town the Belgians hoped to prevent the Louvain garrison from assisting their comrades.

He did not seem to mind much the destruction of the Halls with their world-famous wealth of books; anyway he spoke about it in an unconcerned tone. But he seemed to attach great importance to the safety of the town-hall. He said that when the buildings adjoining the town-hall began to burn, he had them blown up in order to keep the fire away from the beautiful monument.

As darkness was coming on I asked him whether it was not dangerous to pass the night in the house of that little old man, whom I mentioned above. He saw nothing dangerous in it, as by far the greater part of the town was deserted, and no attack need be feared.

So I thought that I might chance it. The house was some distance from the station, near the railway line; opposite stood a sort of goods station guarded by six soldiers. Before entering the house I had a chat with them, for I thought that if I explained my position and told them that the commanding officer gave me permission to pass the night in that house, I should be much safer if anything should happen during the night, because they knew then that they had to deal with a neutral journalist. They might moreover warn me should the fire that was raging all around reach that house. So I told the whole story to these fellows, who were also more than half drunk, showed them my passports, gave them some cigars, and after a friendly chat went

to the old man who was to put me up for the night.

There was of course no gas lit, and there was no paraffin lamp in the house. I was shown to my room by the dim light of a candle. The old man could hardly get up the stairs, as he was trembling all over in consequence of the days passed in fear and dread. The ceiling of my bedroom had been pierced by bullets, and the fragments covered nearly the whole of the bed, which had not been made after it was last used. The unaccustomed work of stripping and making the bed was soon finished, and I was hardly ready when a soldier entered at the door, which had to be left open by order, and shouted from the bottom of the staircase that I was not allowed to have a light, and must blow out my candle.

I was soon fast asleep, tired out by my bicycle ride of that day of about forty-five miles, and my wanderings through Liège. But my rest was not to be a long one. At about ten o'clock I was awakened by a great noise on the stairs, and was surprised to see six armed soldiers in my room. That is not exactly a pleasant manner of waking up after so short a sleep. They informed me in a gruff voice that I had to get up, to dress and follow them. As I obeyed the order, I asked what gave me this unexpected honour; but they refused to enlighten me on that point.

After I had dressed in their presence, they searched all my pockets, and felt all over my body to find out whether I had any arms concealed about me. Then three soldiers went downstairs, I had to

follow these, and the other three came in the rear. I did not understand at all of what capital crime I was suspected which made it necessary to have me arrested by six soldiers armed to the teeth.

We waited in the street for two of the soldiers who went to fetch the old man. After waiting a good while the poor wretch appeared between them. He wept profusely, and between his loud sobs affirmed repeatedly that he was innocent, that he did not know me, that I told him I was a Netherland journalist, and so on, and so on: "Oh, gentlemen!—oh, gentlemen!" he exclaimed, "I must not leave my little boy . . . my laddie; . . . he is quite alone. . . . Oh, let me go!" . . .

I pitied him from the bottom of my heart, and tried to console him by remarking that it was all a misunderstanding, and that I would see to it that he would soon be released.

"Come now quietly," I said; "so much the sooner you will be back with your laddie."

But he did not take any notice of all my exhortations and was entirely impervious to them in his grief. So I went to the station side by side with the weeping man, and surrounded by the six soldiers. The crackle of the flames, the sound of collapsing houses seemed more terrifying in the night than in day-time, and now and again I got a shock when suddenly, by the uncertain light of the flames, I saw the corpse of a civilian lying in the dark shade of the tall trees on the Boulevard.

Whenever our escort fancied that they saw something, they stopped and called out to the supposed approaching persons: "Who goes there?" Some-

times it was only some shrubs that they saw; at other times patrolling German soldiers. "Parole?" was asked: "Duisburg!" and after that answer they came nearer. At the station I was taken to an officer who sat at a table on the platform and had lit up his nearest surroundings by means of a paraffin-lamp. My little old man wept now so badly that he was quite unmanageable, and the officer made up his mind to get rid of him as quickly as possible.

"Tell me, father," he began, "did you allow this man by your side to stay the night at your house?"

"Oh . . . oh . . . let me . . . go to my laddie . . . let me go . . . oh . . . oh . . ."

"Yes, all right, you may go, but we only want you to tell us what you know of this man."

"Oh—oh . . . I don't understand you . . . let me go . . . my little boy . . . we have nothing to eat . . . we are innocent . . . I do not know the gentleman . . . oh . . . oh!"

I took the liberty to explain to the officer that the man did not understand him, and stated that he did not know me.

"Then, why did you want to stay at the man's house?—what brought you here?"

Thus my examination opened. I told him everything from beginning to end, also that the commanding officer had given me permission to stay at that house, that I had shown my papers to the soldiers at the goods station opposite the house, and that I did not understand why I should be put to all this inconvenience.

He explained to me that one of those soldiers accused me of . . . spying and arson. He had thought to recognise in me a person who had asked him that afternoon whether he was . . . a Belgian or a German soldier, and whom he had also seen escaping from a factory which was in full blaze a moment later.

Highly indignant, I claimed of course that that soldier should also be called; but I was told that I had better assume a more modest tone. I then asked to be taken to the commanding officer, whom I had seen that afternoon; but he was away on inspection or something, and would not return before the next morning.

After this the officer examined my papers carefully one by one, and had to admit that they were in perfect order. Still, he had no authority to take a decision before I had been seen by the commanding officer.

The old man was allowed to go home, escorted by the same soldiers. At the very moment that he was about to leave, I happened to notice on the platform a gigantic heap of loaves, brought in by train for the soldiers.

"Do you know," I asked the officer, "that this old man and his grandchild are starving? He put me up because I gave him a couple of pieces of bread-and-butter for the child." He looked at me somewhat crossly, but inquired all the same whether my information was correct, and then gave the old man two loaves, which dried his tears immediately, and for which he thanked the donor in a quivering voice.

Two soldiers now took everything I had in my pockets, even my watch and my purse. This brought also to light a German map of Belgium, with a stamp "For military use only." I was told in a gruff voice that this was a highly suspicious thing, and that they could not understand how it got into my possession. I replied quite coolly that I had bought the thing in Aix-la-Chapelle for one mark, where it could be had in many shops, and that the words "For the military only" merely revealed the shrewd German commercial instinct, which knows that people always like to possess things which are not meant for them.

I believe that this made him angry; at least he ordered me to take off my shoes also, and their inside was carefully examined.

I was now escorted to a spot where on some straw several soldiers were sleeping, who had to do sentry-go at two o'clock that night. It was a part of the platform which was not even roofed, and entirely under the open sky. But they anyway had straw to lie on, and sufficient cover, but I had to lie down between them on the flags, without any blanket. A separate sentry was commanded to watch me; every two hours another was charged with the task. I was allowed to try and sleep, with the warning that I should be shot at the slightest attempt to escape.

It was a chilly night, and a dense heavy fog made it impossible to see anything. . . . My "bed-fellows" raged and fumed at me, saying that I was one of those villains who had treacherously shot at them. I shivered from the cold, and felt, as it were,

the dampness of the wet stone floor entering my system.

While all the others were denouncing me, one soldier was ready to believe that I was a peaceful foreign journalist, and that all the misunderstanding would disappear the next morning as soon as I should be taken to the commanding officer. He took pity on me, and got a thick soldier's coat for me as cover. I still feel grateful to the man for it! But sleep was out of the question on that wet floor, in the dense fog. When the guard was changed and soldiers came back, or others went, they could not see in the dark where they went, and treated me to a kick against my head or some other part of my body.

It was a fantastic night. Trains arrived out of the foggy darkness, their screeching whistle resounding from the far distance, and when they steamed into the station a storm of noise arose. All these trains brought British prisoners of war, captured by the Germans at St. Quentin, and hundreds of German soldiers escorted the trains, which were all covered over with green branches, and looked like copse-wood sliding along the railroad. As soon as they rumbled into the station the escorts sang loudly their patriotic songs, and "Germany before all other!" ("Deutschland über Alles!") vibrated through the fog.

The soldiers lying round about me, and those in other parts of the station, got up, shouting, "There are the British," and ran towards the arriving trains. They jeered at the beaten enemies in all sorts of vulgar and filthy words, which made the German

enthusiasm absolutely lacking in chivalry. Eight trains with captured British arrived during that night.

At seven o'clock in the morning I was taken to the commanding officer, and was glad to see him again. He jumped up immediately and came to me with a charming smile, when I pointed to my escort and explained that I was a prisoner.

He flushed red with anger, and asked the sergeant what it all meant. The latter told the story and I filled in some details.

He showed the most profound indignation, and offered his apologies with lively gestures. He said that my papers proved quite clearly that I was a Netherland journalist. He declined to allow any further examination, and gave the peremptory order that everything that had been taken away from me should be returned at once. When I had put everything in my pockets, he asked:

"Have they given you back everything?"

"Yes, sir," I replied, "excepting my pocket-knife."

"Where is that knife?" Von Manteuffel asked the sergeant who had fetched my belongings.

"But that is a weapon, general!"

"Return that knife at once!"

The general expatiated once more on the francs-tireurs of Louvain, and asked me to explain in my papers without fail that the citizens had to thank themselves for what had happened. The sergeant who had taken me to him was ordered to escort me, that I might not have any further trouble with the soldiers in the city.

I started on my return journey to The Netherlands sick to death. The consequences of lying on that wet floor made themselves badly felt, and besides being quite stiff and chilly, my interior was badly out of order.

Many refugees returned to Louvain that morning simply driven by hunger. I myself lived still on the breakfast I had at Maastricht on the previous day, and badly wanted something to eat, but still more a cup of hot coffee, to warm my chilled body. I was able to get the coffee—without milk or sugar—from a peasant along the road, but food was out of the question. Most of the people had nothing left, others saved a piece of bread as hard as a brick for the moment when hunger might drive them to extreme distress. Whatever sums I offered, nothing could be had before I came to Tirlemont, where I was able to buy three eggs.

I had a rather amusing meeting at Tongres, with a Netherland colleague, who was on his way to Louvain.

"Where do you come from?" was his first question.

"From Louvain!"

"Have you been there already? I am going there too. How are things there?"

"Have you got anything for me to eat?" I asked, not heeding his words.

I said it quite innocently, without any other desire beyond that of taking off the edge of my really trying hunger. But the effect of my question was surprising indeed. He looked at me dumbfounded, and asked:

"But where did you stay then during the night?"
"I have been arrested."
"And did you not get anything to eat?"
"No!"
He was back in The Netherlands before me.

CHAPTER IX

LOUVAIN UNDER THE MAILED FIST

THE next day at Maastricht I tried to cure the evil results of that night on the damp floor in Louvain by eating great quantities of rice and drinking much cocoa with liberal doses of cinnamon, but as it was of no avail, I started again the next morning.

The majority of the refugees returning to Louvain belonged to the lower classes, and they began to loot and plunder the town, encouraged thereto by the German soldiers, who threw the things into the streets, and said: "Take it, if you like!" In extenuation of the looting and plundering I might say that the poor wretches tried before all to get hold of half-burned eatables.

During my first visit I estimated the number of civilian victims at about eighty. This number turned out to be larger, as many during the second fire fled to their cellars, exits of which were however choked up by the collapsing walls. The corpses of numerous suffocated citizens were found in these cellars.

At many monasteries I heard painful details of the treatment suffered by priests. The majority were made prisoners, and many were tied to trees during a whole night and afterwards released. Several were killed. I heard, for example, at the

convent of the Jesuits that a student of theology, Eugène Dupiereux, had been murdered, simply because he was found to have kept a diary of the war in which he had expressed a rather unfavourable opinion about the Germans. In the same manner two Josephite brothers were murdered, who later on were found to be Germans; of other priests who had been killed, the names were not yet known.

Many clerical gentlemen connected with the University had been ill-treated in the most atrocious manner. The architect Lenertz, a native of Luxemburg, also connected with the University, had been shot, for no reason at all, before the eyes of his wife at the moment that he left the house. And Louvain was so effectively cut off from the outer world that in most convents I was asked whether the rumour was true that the Pope was dead! And at that time his successor had already been appointed.

I succeeded in laying my hands on an original copy of a proclamation that ought not to have been posted before the following day. I took the document with me to The Netherlands, and it is of special interest, because in it the Germans admit to have tyrannised the people, and to have not only burned Louvain, but also ransacked the town. The proclamation had been drawn up in concert with the German authorities and was approved by them. It was in French and in Flemish, and read as follows:

"PROCLAMATION

"To the inhabitants of the City of Louvain

"We have in vain visited our municipal repre-

sentatives. The last of them, Alderman Schmidt, who was prevented from fulfilling his office, surrendered to us the municipal power on August 30th.

"I believe that it is my duty to take that task upon me, assisted by some well-known burgesses, who have undertaken to stand by me.

"In agreement with the German Military authority I invite the inhabitants of Louvain to return to the city, and to take up again their usual occupations.

"The orders issued by Monsieur Collins remain valid.

"I mention more especially:—

"1. That it is prohibited to be out of doors after seven o'clock (Belgian time) in the evening.

"2. That all who are in possession of any arms, of whatever description, or any munition must at once deliver everything at the town-hall.

"3. That everything that may appear hostile to the German army must be avoided with the utmost care.

"The German military authority have promised us that on these conditions no further burning and looting shall take place and that the population shall no longer be threatened or embarrassed.

"We are engaged now most actively upon the re-establishment of the municipal services: Police, Municipal Register, and the Services of the Canals, which services will all be reopened as soon as possible.

"The police service will be performed in the daytime by some volunteers, who will wear an armlet in the municipal colours, and an identity card, both officially stamped. Well-minded persons, who are willing to perform these duties, are urgently re-

quested to present themselves at the town-hall to-day at four o'clock in the afternoon.

"The acting burgomaster, A. NERINCX.

"The town-clerk, EUG. MARGUERY.

"The committee of burgesses! DR. BOINE, *Pastor* CLAES, DR. P. DEBAISIEUX, DR. DECONINCK, CH. DE LA VALLÉE-POUSSIN, MONSEIGNEUR DEPLOIGNE, P. HELLEPUTTE, A. THIERY, DR. TITS, L. VERHELST, V. VINGEROEDT.

"LOUVAIN,

"*September 1st,* 1914."

Pastor Claes, mentioned in the above proclamation, has done very much for the miserable Louvain population; they owe him especially much gratitude for an act of devotion with regard to the murdered victims.

In the immediate neighbourhood of the railway station a house was being built, of which only the foundations were laid. The place showed nothing beyond a huge cavity. I had noticed already several times that there was an atrocious stench near the station, which at last became unendurable. Pastor Claes, who courageously entered all destroyed houses to look for the dead, had discovered the victims also in this place. In the cave just mentioned he found sixteen corpses of burghers, two priests among them. In order to remove them from the street the Germans had simply thrown them into that cave, without covering the corpses in any way. They had been lying there for days, and were decaying rapidly.

I witnessed Pastor Claes's labours for a moment only, for the smell was unbearable even at a some-

what considerable distance. The good pastor persevered in the work after having started it, with the assistance of some faithful helpers, who all of them had sealed their mouths with a sponge soaked in some disinfectant. The corpses were taken from the cave, money and documents put away in separate bags, and the unfortunate owners coffined and blessed.

During the next days I found a hospitable domicile at the convent of the Sacred Heart on the Namur Canal ("Naamsche Vest"). It is a seminary for missionaries, and when I went to them for the first time I had a letter from their head, the "provincial" in The Netherlands, who sent the order that all the theological students should be transferred to The Netherlands as quickly as possible. They received me with the greatest kindness, and ever since I enjoyed their hospitality.

A short time after the destruction I was even obliged to accept it for a whole week, as on the same day on which I arrived in Louvain for another visit there was renewed fighting round the town. The Belgians had advanced as far as Rotselair, where the next day they held their ground against overwhelmingly superior numbers; but at last they had to retire, leaving a great many dead behind. The Belgians had even got on to the road Tirlemont-Louvain, and blown up the railway line in two places.

On that occasion the Germans arrested me at about two miles from Tirlemont. Firstly, because I travelled by bicycle, and secondly, because I was accused of having "cooked" one of my passports.

This was so far true that I had altered the dates

of a passport, which allowed me to stay in Louvain from September 6th till the 14th, into the 8th and the 16th. When taken to the commanding officer in Tirlemont, I convinced him so thoroughly of my complete innocence, that the next day I was allowed to go on to Louvain.

There the German authorities detained me for a full week, by prohibiting me to return: "for the sake of your own safety," they told me courteously. During the day I was busy enough, and in the evenings I enjoyed the pleasant company of the three fathers of the Sacred Heart who had remained in the mission house, and with whose photographic instrument I took many a snapshot of the Louvain ruins.

The mission house had become a sanctuary for a good many people. As bread was lacking, two brothers fried pancakes all day long and distributed them among the numberless persons who asked for food. Among these were people who a few days earlier belonged to the well-to-do, but who saw their business, in which often more than their own capital was invested, wrecked by fire, and were now obliged to appeal to the charity of these monks. Indeed during the first weeks after that terrible event many starved, and I assisted often at the distribution of the pancakes, because they were short-handed.

In this grand old monastery, both inside and out a jewel of architecture, about five hundred people had found shelter. They were lodged in halls, rooms, and kitchens. The fathers gave them everything in the way of food they might require, but they had to do their own cooking. As not one of these people had a home left, which they could call

their own, no wonder that they greatly admired the fathers. Often when I strolled about with one of these, one or other of the refugees came to him to press his hand and express gratitude for the hospitality offered.

In this way I got into conversation with a middle-aged lady. Her husband had been shot, and she got a bullet in her arm, which had to be amputated in consequence. The poor creature had lost all courage, and lived on her nerves only. It was remarkable to hear this father find the right words, and succeed in making her calm and resigned. Before she left us, she had promised that for her children's sake she would do all in her power to control herself.

During the week of my compulsory stay in Louvain I had also the privilege of making the acquaintance of two brave compatriots; I mean Professor Noyons and his wife.

They never left Louvain. On August 25th information was sent to the Leo XIII Institution for Philosophy, a building turned into a hospital, that a hundred wounded men might be expected towards evening. That evening began the wild shooting and burning of houses by the Germans, and soon a large number of wounded was taken to the Institution. Suddenly Professor Noyons recognised one of his servants among the wounded who were brought to him for treatment. She had three bullets in her side. After having bandaged her wounds, he hurried away to his house, in order to see what had happened.

He thought that it was sufficiently protected by

the immense Red Cross flag, and the words written on the door by the Germans themselves: "Professor Noyons, Netherland physician, to be spared." But he had been mistaken. The soldiers did not respect anything, and had forced an entry into the house, wounded that servant, and then wrecked everything in the most scandalous manner. Beautiful large Japanese jars had been smashed to pieces, valuable furniture damaged by knocking and breaking large pieces out of it with rifles and bayonets. A fine carpet was burned, as well as many pieces of furniture. A hole was burned even in the floor.

Professor Noyons took me over the house and showed me the destruction. Bullets had been lodged in the inner walls after piercing the windows and on a level with the windows. By lengthening the line of trajection one found that the bullets must have been fired at a distance of nearly six hundred yards, which proves that the Germans simply fired at random.

As Professor Noyons heard that other hospitals, churches, and ancient buildings were not spared either, he went to the commanding officer through the rain of bullets, clad in his white overalls, to claim protection for everything that lawfully displayed the Red Cross flag, and to request that churches, convents, ancient buildings, and especially the town-hall should be spared. It is only owing to his intervention that not much more was destroyed in Louvain.

On the Thursday of the week of destruction the inhabitants were notified that they had to leave the

town, but Professor Noyons and his wife decided to stay on, as they could not leave the one hundred and fifty wounded men who were laid up at the Institution.

They carried all those patients into the cellars on stretchers, and there waited with the nursing staff for the bombardment that had been announced, but never came off.

Professor Noyons took me all over the hospital, and if I should describe all I saw and heard there, that story alone would fill volumes. He took me, for example, to a boy of eight years old, whose shoulder was shattered by rifle-shots. His father and mother, four little brothers and a sister, had been murdered. The boy himself was saved because they thought that he was dead, whereas he was only unconscious. When I asked for his parents, brothers and sister, he put up his one hand and, counting by his little fingers, he mentioned their names.

There lay also a woman, with one leg amputated. Her husband had been murdered, another bullet had entered the leg of the baby in her arms. Another woman had her child murdered in her arms.

Women and children had frequently been ill-treated in a most atrocious manner, aged and sick people were dragged out of the houses, and flung down in the street. This happened, for example, to an old man, who lay dying in his cellar. In spite of the supplications of his wife and two sons, he was flung on the cobbles, where he died soon. The sons were taken prisoners and sent away. His widow assists at present nursing other unfortunates at Professor Noyons' hospital.

A paralysed woman who had also been flung into the street was nursed at the hospital, and lay with many others in the chapel of the Institution, which had been turned into a ward.

Belgian and German soldiers found excellent nursing here. Many convalescents were allowed to walk in the large garden, which was happily divided by a large wall, so that the one-time combatants could be separated.

Professor and Mrs. Noyons were busy day and night on behalf of their fellow-men, and one could quite well tell by their looks that they were overworked. They took their rest in the kitchen, which was built in the basement. All male and female voluntary nurses took their meals there.

Once I enjoyed the pleasure of partaking of such a "dinner," as the guest of Professor and Mrs. Noyons. The company was very mixed, and men who never in their lives had ever done anything else but spoiling their eyes for the sake of science, by reading all manner of ancient manuscripts, were now busy, dressed in a blue apron, stirring the soup and mashing potatoes or vegetables. The menu comprised nothing but potatoes, a little vegetables, and a finely calculated piece of meat.

At that dinner I also made the acquaintance of Professor Nerincx, the acting burgomaster. It was a courageous act to assume the government of the town destroyed by the Germans; he did it for the sake of his fellow-citizens, who will never be able to requite their indebtedness to the temporary burgomaster for what he did for them; and most of them do not even know it.

The war is not over yet, and much is still hidden under a veil, but after the war it will undoubtedly be the duty of the Louvain people to twine a magnificent wreath round the three names Noyons-Nerincx-Claes.

The names of many priests will be found in the register of Belgian martyrs. I have mentioned already some who, although innocent, gave their life for their country. During my week's stay at Louvain I heard of other cases. The priest of Corbeek-Loo, for example, was simply tortured to death on account of one of his sermons in which he said that the fight of the Belgian army was beautiful "because it lawfully resists an unlawful invasion," and further for announcing a Holy Requiem Mass for the souls of the "murdered" citizens.

At Blauwput, near Louvain, where, according to the Germans, there had been also shooting, many houses were set on fire and the men placed in a row. It was then announced that by way of punishment every fifth man would be shot. When the Germans counted as tenth the father of a large family, that man fainted, and they simply killed number eleven, a Capuchin.

Very many other cases of martyrdom among priests remained unknown to me, but the various Belgian bishops examined all these events with praiseworthy zeal and scrupulousness, and by taking extensive evidence established the fact that in no case the victims could be reproached with any act that justified the sentence against them. After the war the world will surely be made acquainted with the horrible truth.

The foregoing record of my experiences in Louvain will make it sufficiently clear to the unprejudiced reader that the destruction and wholesale murders were nothing but wanton crimes committed by the German troops stationed there, crimes which it is impossible to justify on any ground.

The duration of the war has more or less surprised me, and I postponed writing this book for a long time as I wished to quote the evidence of persons in high places, clergymen, and educated foreigners. As the war is not over yet, I must omit these in the interest of their safety.

But from my personal knowledge and the evidence referred to, I am able to establish the following facts in connection with the events that preceded and followed the destruction of Louvain.

On August 25th the Antwerp garrison made a sortie, in the direction of Louvain. At the beginning the Belgians were successful, and came within four and a half miles of this town. For a moment the situation became critical, and at about seven o'clock a small troop of cavalry came at a furious gallop from the scene of battle to Louvain, probably to summon the assistance of the garrison.

At that hour the Namur Canal ("Naamsche Vest") was already dark in consequence of the thick foliage of tall trees, and suddenly the wild horsemen were shot at. Several neutral witnesses established the fact that this was done by a small troop of German infantry who came from the station, probably on their way to the battle-field, and thought that Belgian cavalry came racing into the town.

The men stopped their horses, dismounted, and

returned the fire from behind their animals. This went on for about a quarter of an hour. Every one was alarmed by this shooting; other soldiers came racing in from the station, and others ran to and fro near that building crying, "A surprise attack!" Some, thinking that the attack came from the advancing Belgians, rushed to the place where the fighting took place, others misunderstood the cry, believed that the citizens assaulted them, and began to shoot at these, and at the houses.

Before those on the Naamsche Vest found out their mistake, the shooting was going on in the greater part of the town, and the excited men, who at first had been shooting at each other, soon joined the rest. Some wounded troopers were taken to one of the convents on the Vest, but a couple of hours later they were suddenly fetched away again.

The whole evening and the next day the Germans went on shooting people and firing houses. It is worth recording that the library was already set on fire that same evening of the fray on the Naamsche Vest; it was burning at eight o'clock.

On Thursday everyone, even the persons staying in the Institution and hospitals, were ordered to leave the town, as it was to be shelled. They seemed to have no pity even on the wretched wounded men. Only the male and female nurses remained with these, of their own free will, determined to die with them if necessary.

The inhabitants were driven to the station, where the husbands were cruelly separated from their wives and several persons were shot. Other men were escorted to a place behind the station, and their

wives and children were told that those men were going to be shot. The poor things heard indeed the click-clack of the rifles and thought that their dear ones were dead. However, many returned later, and their "shooting" seems to have been a mere sham.

Great crowds walked the long way to Tirlemont. They were constantly threatened by German soldiers, who aimed their rifles at them; passing officers commanded from time to time that some should stay behind, and others were shot. Especially did the clerics amongst the refugees suffer a great deal; many were not only scandalously scoffed at, but also maliciously injured. The greater part of the Germans showed a strong anti-Catholic bias, in particular against the clergy, whom they accused of having incited the people against them.

This is only a short record of the destruction of Louvain, the truthfulness of which will be firmly and fully established after the war by extensive, accurately drawn up declarations.

Louvain had been destroyed because a crowd of wanton soldiers, who were garrisoned there, who hated the Belgians, and who had been kept within bounds with difficulty, seized on their own stupid mistake to give rein to their passions.

Their commanding officer was the worthy head of such a mob, a heartless creature, who did not show the slightest remorse for the destruction of those magnificent libraries, set on fire *by his order.*

It has been alleged that civilians had been shooting from the Halls, but when a committee examined the remains in the building with the consent of

the military, they found there the carcase of a German horse. They were ordered to stop their investigations immediately, for that horse was evidence . . . that German military men had been billeted on the building, and thus no civilians could have been there. This will also be published later in the reports.

The German authority left indeed no effort untried to cover up their atrocious action. Already in a communication from Wolff, dated August 29th, they attempted to violate the truth by asserting that:—

"The houses caught fire from burning benzine, and the flames burst out in other quarters also. On Wednesday afternoon part of the town and the northern suburb were in flames."

They have not been able to maintain that story for very long; the truth overtook the lie.

May all the nations of the world after the war collaborate to compensate Louvain for her martyrdom, see that this city shall be restored to her former, happy prosperity, and get a library which approaches as much as possible the one she lost. The Germans can probably do their part by investigating where the motor-cars went which left the Halls on that wretched Tuesday night, heavily laden with books.

CHAPTER X

ALONG THE MEUSE TO HUY, ANDENNE, AND NAMUR

BETWEEN two of my several trips to Louvain I made one to Namur in the beginning of September, after having secured at Liège, by a trick, a splendid permit which enabled me to travel even by motor-car.

There was a little more order in the whole district round Liège, since the Germans behaved more decently, and provisions had arrived. The shock, which the burning and butchering of so many places and persons gave to the whole world, had also influenced the conduct of the Germans, and from the beginning of September they made a practice of asking each time when they thought that they had behaved decently: "Well, are we such barbarians as the world calls us?"

In this relative calm the population felt somewhat relieved, and ventured again into the streets. Outdoors on the "stoeps" of the houses men sat on their haunches smoking their pipe and playing a game of piquet. Most of them were vigorous fellows, miners, who did not mind any amount of work, but now came slowly under the demoralising influence of idleness.

My motor whirled along the gloriously fine road

to Huy. It is a delicious tour through the beautiful valley of the Meuse, along sloping light-green roads. Had the circumstances not been so sad, I should have enjoyed it better.

I had already been near Huy, at a time when several burning houses shrouded the whole town in clouds of smoke. On August 24th, at ten o'clock at night, some shots had been fired in the neighbourhood of the viaduct. This was a sign for hundreds of soldiers to begin shooting at random and arrest several persons. Several houses were perforated like sieves by bullets, and an entire street of twenty-eight houses, the Rue du Jardin, was reduced to ashes. No civilians were killed.

It is evident from the "Report on the Violations of International Law in Belgium" that the Germans themselves admit that they were in the wrong with regard to the atrocities which were committed here. The following order of the day proves it:

"Last night a shooting affray took place. There is no evidence that the inhabitants of the towns had any arms in their houses, nor is there evidence that the people took part in the shooting; on the contrary, it seems that the soldiers were under the influence of alcohol, and began to shoot in a senseless fear of a hostile attack.

"The behaviour of the soldiers during the night, with very few exceptions, makes a scandalous impression.

"It is highly deplorable when officers or non-commissioned officers set houses on fire without the permission or order of the commanding, or, as the case may be, the senior officer, or when by their attitude

they encourage the rank and file to burn and plunder.

"I require that everywhere a strict investigation shall take place into the conduct of the soldiers with regard to the life and property of the civilian population.

"I prohibit all shooting in the towns without the order of an officer.

"The miserable behaviour of the men has been the cause that a non-commissioned officer and a private were seriously wounded by German ammunition.

"The Commanding Officer,
"MAJOR VON BASSEWITZ."

I was informed further that there had been no fighting for the possession of Huy. The citadel on which the German flag flew had not been put in a state of defence on account of its great age. The old bridge over the Meuse at Huy had been wrecked by the Belgians, but the Germans had simply driven stout piles into the river, to support a floor which they put over the wrecked part, and so restored the traffic.

During my visit I happened to make the acquaintance of Mr. Derricks, a brother of the lawyer who had been murdered so cruelly at Canne, and also a member of the Provincial States. The poor man was deeply moved when he heard the details about his brother's death. I made him very happy by taking a letter with me for his sister-in-law, who was now at Maastricht.

At Andenne things seemed much worse than at Huy. I stopped there on my way to Namur, and had been prepared in Liège for the sad things I

should hear. A proclamation posted in the last-named town ran as follows:—

"*August 22nd,* 1914.

"After having protested their peaceful sentiments the inhabitants of Andenne made a treacherous attack on our troops.

"The Commanding General burned down the whole city with my consent, shooting also about one hundred persons.

"I acquaint the inhabitants of Liège of this, that they may understand what fate threatens them if they should assume a similar attitude.

"The Commanding General-in-Chief,
"VON BUELOW."

General von Buelow says here that he gave his consent to the shooting of about one hundred persons, but I can state with absolute certainty that there were about 400 victims. We must therefore assume that the other 300 were killed without his consent.

Andenne, on the right bank of the Meuse, was a town of 8,000 inhabitants. When the Germans arrived there on the morning of August 19th they found the bridge connecting Andenne and Seilles wrecked. In the afternoon they began building a pontoon bridge, which was ready the next day. They were very much put out about the wrecking of the other bridge, by the Belgian soldiers, a couple of hours before their arrival. Their exasperation became still greater when they discovered after having finished the pontoon bridge, that the big tun-

nel on the left bank of the Meuse had also been made useless by barricades and entanglements.

By refusing to pay at cafés and shops the military already expressed their dissatisfaction. Then on Thursday, August 20th, about six in the evening, after a great many troops had crossed the river by the pontoon bridge, a shot was heard which seemed the sign for a terrible fusillade. Guns seemed to have been mounted at convenient places outside the town, for shells exploded right at its centre. The troops did no longer cross the bridge, but spread themselves in a disorderly manner all over the town, constantly shooting at the windows. Even mitrailleuses were brought into action. Those of the inhabitants who could fly did so, but many were killed in the streets and others perished by bullets entering the houses through the windows. Many others were shot in the cellars, for the soldiers forced their way in, in order to loot the bottles of wine and to swallow their fill of liquor, with the result that very soon the whole garrison was a tipsy mob.

It struck me always that as soon as something took place anywhere which might lead to disorder, the method adopted was as follows: first a fusillade in order to scare the inhabitants, secondly looting of numberless bottles of wine, and finally cruel, inhuman murders, the ransacking and the wrecking.

The game of shooting and looting went on all through the night of the 20th. Not a window or door remained whole even if the house was not burned down altogether.

At four o'clock in the morning all the men, women, and children who had not yet been put to death

were driven to the Place des Tilleuls, but on the way many men had their brains blown out. Amongst others, Dr. Camus, the septuagenarian burgomaster, was then wounded and afterwards received the finishing stroke by a hatchet.

At the Place des Tilleuls fifty men were taken from the crowd at random, escorted to the Meuse, and shot. In the meantime other soldiers went on wrecking, firing, and looting.

Andenne offered a dismal spectacle. The doors and windows of the houses that were not completely burned down had been kicked and beaten to pieces, and boards had been nailed before the holes. The inhabitants hung about disconsolately, and I could tell by their faces how they suffered, for every family in the town mourned the death of one dear to them.

They all became excited whenever I mentioned the accusations brought against them. They asserted with the greatest emphasis that it was an absolute lie that the civilians had shot. "Even if they torture me to death," said most of them, "I'll still contend that this accusation is untrue."

The German officers, of course, held a different opinion; they alleged that the shooting by the civilians was even very general and purported to be a decided attack on the army. I asked them whether they had found any rifles or other arms at the "searches" of the houses—I expressed myself somewhat cautiously on purpose—for that ought to have been the case if such a great number of citizens had joined in the shooting. "No," they answered, "they were sly enough to see to it that we did not

find these. They had been buried in time, of course."

The answer is, surely, not very convincing!

The Germans had flung some more bridges across the river beyond Andenne, which had been used for the occupation of Namur chiefly, and lay idle now guarded by only one sentry. I left by the town-gate without any difficulties; the German soldiers jumped out of the way and stood to attention, as soon as they noticed the Netherland flag flying at the front of the motor. To the right and the left of the gateway they had written in gigantic letters: "Newspapers, please!"

Namur was shelled on August 21st and the 23rd. Many houses were then already wrecked, many civilians killed. On the 23rd the Belgian army withdrew and only some of the forts were defended. This withdrawal of the Belgian army may have been a strategical necessity, but it is certain that the forts had not been defended unto the last. Five forts fell into the hands of the Germans without having suffered any damage.

On the afternoon of the 23rd the hostile troops entered the town, and on that day the inhabitants had not to suffer, excepting from requisitions made. But the following evening it was suddenly on fire at various spots, and the soldiers began to shoot in all directions, making many victims. Before setting the houses on fire, with a liberal use of the lozenges mentioned already, the usurpers ransacked them and removed numerous pieces of valuable furniture. The Place d'Armes, the Place Léopold, the Rue St. Nicolas, Rue Rogier, and the Avenue de la Plante were almost entirely reduced to ashes. With

the town-hall many valuable pictures were destroyed. The day following the conflagration they left off shooting at last, but the looting went on for days more.

When I drove into Namur, I found the town comparatively quiet; there was some traffic in the streets, and Belgian army surgeons and British nurses in their uniforms walked about freely. There were many wounded: the German wounded were all placed in the military hospital; the Belgians and the French had been taken to the Sisters of Mercy, the Institution Saint Louis, the High School for Girls, and the Sisters of Our Lady.

When I was eating a little at one of the hotels near the railway station, I was offered the newspaper *l'Ami de l'Ordre,* which had appeared again for the first time on that day, September 7th, under the Censorship of the German authorities. For curiosity's sake I translate here the first leaderette, published under the rule of the new masters:—

"ENOUGH DESTROYED, ENOUGH DISTRESSED!

"More than one hundred houses have been burned or wrecked at Namur, among them the town-hall, the house at the Namur Citadel, and the Institution for ophthalmology in the Place Léopold. In the Grand Marché and its neighbourhood about sixty have been destroyed by fire. If we add to this the damage done by the bombardment from Friday the 21st until Sunday the 23rd August, and the wrecking of the bridges after the retreat of the army, we may estimate the losses at 10,000,000 francs.

"Industry, trade, and agriculture exist no longer, labour is unemployed, and food is getting scarce, and over this dismal scene hovers the memory of numerous victims, of hundreds of prisoners of war or missing soldiers. During the bombardment of August 23rd one hundred persons were killed outright, or succumbed to their wounds. There are innumerable other wounded. This it is plain must have plunged the town into deep distress.

"It mourns the lost liberty, the happiness, the peace, the brightness of her past prosperity which has vanished for a long season to come, it laments on account of the prisoners of war, the wounded, the dead. . . . And every morning the brilliant sun rises on the scene, the warm rays bathe town and country, both alike cruelly lashed by the frightful scourge.

"Yesterday crowds of believers prayed for peace, for that blessing which is only valued when it is lost. Let us repeat our supplications twofold, let us increase our zeal. Lord! O Lord! listen to the voice of Thy people who pray to Thee! Be merciful! Give us back our peace!"

CHAPTER XI

FROM MAASTRICHT TO THE FRENCH FRONTIER

The Destruction of Dinant

Adventures incite to ever more risky undertakings, and we long constantly for more sensation. Such an experience prompted me to an arrangement with Mr. Tervooren, editor of *Het Leven,* to try to motor to the French frontier.

We left Maastricht, in the early morning of September 9th, with a smart fellow as chauffeur. Louvain we found tolerably quiet, although fearful scenes were witnessed in the search for corpses, which were found in the cellars of many houses.

On that day I saw for the first time in Belgium German sailors and marines, and even an admiral and some officers. At that time the appearance of the naval men gave the newspapers much room for conjectures; it was found later that they were to be used in the attack on Antwerp, and afterwards had the task allotted to them of occupying the sea-board.

I found sailors also in Brussels, but for the rest there was only a little military display there. In this town reigned a certain oppressive silence and

the cafés were not much frequented. The Brussels people did not hide their patriotic sentiments, and nearly every house displayed the Belgian flag, thanks chiefly to the strong attitude of Burgomaster Max. Outwardly Brussels had not suffered by the war; not a house was damaged and nobody had been killed yet. Nor was there lack of provisions, as was proved by the fact that at the "Métropole," one of the largest restaurants, I paid only seventy-five centimes (sevenpence-halfpenny) for bread, cold beef, and pickles.

We met only a few Germans on the road from Brussels to Charleroi, and found no garrison except in the townlet Hal. Very little burning had taken place on this road, but so much the more plundering and looting. A woman took us all over her house in the neighbourhood of Brussels, to show us the total wrecking. Small pieces of furniture were generally taken away, but stoves, kitcheners, and cupboards were smashed. She herself had had her face badly wounded, because she had hidden herself in the cellar when the Germans came near, and they had beaten her out of that with their rifle-butts. Many other women were treated in the same manner.

When we came to Jumet, a suburb of Charleroi, and a prosperous place with flourishing factories, we found the whole town wrecked. . . . Nearly all the houses were burned immediately after the occupation by the Germans, and many inhabitants were killed, of course under the pretext that they had been shooting.

After driving through this scene of misery we

entered Charleroi, and exactly at that moment one of the springs of my motor broke in two, which made the car useless. Charleroi seemed worse damaged than Namur. According to an official statement issued at the time, one hundred and sixty-five houses had been burned, among them many on the fine Boulevard Audent, the Saint Joseph Institute, the convent of the Sœurs de Namur, and the adjacent ancient, miraculous little chapel of "Sainte Marie des Remparts."

Probably more than one hundred civilians had been shot, whereas many perished in the cellars. The heads of the municipality and several priests had at first been taken as hostages. Bail of ten million francs was asked for their release, but after much haggling they consented to accept one and a half millions, which sum was forthcoming from the various local banks.

Just as at Louvain and other towns, the Germans indulged in looting and plundering also at Charleroi; and probably this explains why here too the finest houses were destroyed. Moreover, many atrocious cases of rape occurred here as at Dinant, about which town more anon. At a café, where the proprietor unburdened his mind to me, with tears in his eyes, I read a statement in which they were impudent enough to write that they had passed a pleasant night in circumstances described in detail, whilst the father had been locked up.

Charleroi was taken on August 22nd. On the evening of the 21st a small patrol had entered the town, and of these not a man escaped. But in the morning of the 22nd at seven o'clock a large force

of Germans arrived and immediately began to burn and to shoot.

On the day of my stay at Charleroi, at about seven o'clock in the evening, there was a good deal of bustle round about the station, many trains from Maubeuge arriving. One of these trains was entirely filled by officers of the garrison who had been taken prisoner. Another carried only wounded Germans, lying on light stretchers, on which they were transported through the streets to the hospitals at Charleroi. Many had fearful wounds, and convulsively held their hands on the injured parts, while others lay still, the pallor of death on their face. Maubeuge must have cost the Germans enormous sacrifices, as for many of the wretched wounded no room could be found at Charleroi, and they had to be taken farther by train, to Namur or Brussels.

German officials told that immediately after the surrender Maubeuge had been set on fire in various places, because civilians, etc. . . . The reader is by now able to complete the sentence.

After I had collected some information in the town and my colleague of *Het Leven* had taken several snapshots, we thought that it was time to look for lodgings and to get our motor-car repaired.

We found rooms, but were guarded during the night by soldiers, who walked up and down the landing, because there were officers also staying at the hotel. Their regular footfall prevented us from sleeping a wink, but with the help of some fibs and Netherland cigars we induced them to let us go out, and we went to a sort of smith in a kind of garage to repair the motor-car. We turned up our sleeves

and, assisted by the smith's technical directions, succeeded in putting the broken spring together, using stout steel clamps and screws.

Before leaving we went back to the hotel for breakfast. There—it was a first-class hotel—they gave us an apology for coffee, without milk or sugar, and two flimsy pieces of bread, as hard as wood and as black as shoe-polish. I was intensely hungry, and as nowhere at Charleroi anything else could be had, I did my best with the wooden bread and succeeded in washing it down with much chewing and jawing. But the sweet, hard stuff did not suit my digestion, and I felt ill already when at six o'clock we got into the motor-car and left for Dinant.

We could not keep to the main road all the time, for it was forbidden by proclamation to go farther than nine miles and a half from the town, and we should have been stopped without fail.

We first drove through the suburb Montigny-sur-Sambre, which shared the fate of Jumet, and was entirely destroyed by fire. After leaving the town we went in the direction of Châtelet, where we found an immense battle-field. Terrific fighting must have taken place here, for the number of buried was enormous. On a wide stretch of land we saw a great number of mounds, with crosses, and covered with quicklime. On the crosses the numbers are given of the brave who fell there. So I read, for example:—

"Here rest 10 soldiers, French, I. Reg. 36.
fell 22.8. R.I.P."

"Here rest 23 soldiers, German, I.R. 78. and 91. fell 22.8.14. R.I.P."

"Here rest 7 officers, German, I.R. fell 22.8.14. R.I.P."

"Here rest 140 soldiers, French, I.R. 36. fell 22.8. R.I.P."

There were very many similar ones, but I copied only these, because they lay just near the road; farther on there were numerous other white mounds with crosses.

The villages Gougnies and Biesmes had been destroyed also; of the former not one house was left undamaged; but nothing happened to the townlet Mettet. Here we were forbidden to go on, as we were already more than nine miles and a half from Charleroi. This compelled us to leave the main road, and to proceed along byways which soon took us to the Ardennes, where our motor-car rushed along in zigzags.

From time to time the tour became a break-neck affair, as the mountain roads were wet and muddy after much rain, and at corners we were often in great fear of being hurled down into the depth. It was a wonderfully fine district of green rock, although somewhat monotonous after a time, as it seemed that we were simply moving in a circle, which impression was strengthened by the fact that frequently we passed through tunnels and viaducts which were very alike to one another.

I felt very sick, for the sweet rye-bread which I had forced down my throat in the morning did not

agree with me at all. At last I felt so ill that I was obliged to lie down on the floor of the car, and it took my colleague all his time to convince me that he did not think that my last hour had struck.

In the end and in despair I accepted an aspirin tablet which he had pressed on me a hundred times, and although I do not know whether it was owing to that, or in spite of it, it was a fact that I felt somewhat better.

After touring quite a long while through this labyrinth, we got at last back to the main road from Namur to Dinant, near Anhec. Here immediately we saw proofs of war, drawn from widespread destruction. The railway bridge across the Meuse near Houx, so picturesquely situated at the foot of a high rock, had been blown up.

Bouvigne, a hamlet near Dinant, had suffered fearfully from the bombardment of that town. Trees were splintered by the shells, the church was nearly a total wreck from the same cause, and two houses by the road had been riddled by bullets into a sieve, and also damaged by shells. On the whole scene of war I have not seen one house carrying so many bullets in it; their holes made the doors look like wire-netting. In these houses the French had barricaded themselves, brought mitrailleuses to them, and defended them until the last. None of those heroes left them alive. My colleague took many snapshots of this remarkable spot, while I collected bullets, fragments of shell, and similar mementos of this warfield.

In order to give the reader some idea of the fearful things that happened at Dinant, I insert here

some quotations from the reports drawn up by the Belgian Inquiry Committee about the Violations of International Law, of which I can affirm the truth word for word, because they are identical with the information that I got myself at Dinant.

"The destruction took place from August 21st to the 25th.

"On August 15th a fierce fight took place between the French troops on the left bank of the Meuse and the Germans who approached from the east. The Germans were defeated, put to flight, and chased by the French, who crossed the river. On that day the town was not damaged much. Some houses were destroyed by German howitzers, which were undoubtedly aimed at the French regiments on the left bank. One Red Cross helper who lived at Dinant was killed by a German bullet when he was taking up one of the wounded.

"The next day all remained quiet, the French keeping the surrounding places occupied; not one fight took place between the two armies and nothing happened which might be looked upon as a hostile action by the populations, and there were no German troops near Dinant.

"At about nine o'clock of Friday evening, August 21st, German soldiers arriving by rail from Ciney marched into the town by the Rue Saint Jacques. They began to shoot into the windows without the slightest provocation, killed a workman who was on his way home, wounded another inhabitant and compelled him to call out: 'Long live the Kaiser.' A third they wounded in the abdomen with thrusts of their bayonets. They burst into the cafés, requisitioned all spirits, got tipsy on them, and left after

setting several houses on fire and knocking to pieces the doors and windows of others.

"The inhabitants, frightened and perplexed, hid themselves in the houses.

"On Sunday, August 23rd, at half-past six in the morning, the soldiers of the 108th regiment of the line drove the worshippers out of the Premonstratensian Church, separated the men from the women, and shot about fifty of the former through the head. Between seven and nine o'clock there were house-to-house looting and burning by the soldiers, who chased the inhabitants into the street. Those who tried to escape were shot off-hand.

"At about nine o'clock the soldiers drove all who had been found in the houses in front of them by means of blows from their rifle-butts. They crowded them together in the Place d'Armes, where they kept them until six o'clock in the evening. Their guards amused themselves by telling the men repeatedly that they would soon be shot.

"At six o'clock a captain separated the men from the women and children. The women were placed behind a line of infantry. The men had to stand alongside a wall; those in the first row were ordered to sit on their haunches, the others to remain standing behind them. A platoon took a stand straight opposite the group. The women prayed in vain for mercy for their husbands, their sons, and their brothers; the officer gave the order to fire. He had not made the slightest investigation, pronounced no sentence of any sort.

"A score of these men were merely wounded and fell among the dead. For greater certainty the soldiers fired once more into the mass. A few got off scot-free in spite of the double fusillade. For over two hours they pretended to be dead, remained

among the corpses without budging, and when it was dark were able to fly to the mountains. Eighty-four victims remained behind and were buried in a garden in the neighbourhood.

"There were other murders on that same 23rd of August.

"Soldiers discovered inhabitants of the suburb Saint Pierre in the cellars of a brewery, and killed them on the spot.

"On the previous day many workmen of the silk factory Kimmer and their wives and children had found a shelter in the cellars of the building, with some neighbours and relatives of their employer. At six o'clock in the evening the unfortunate people made up their mind to leave their hiding-place and went into the street, headed by a white flag. They were immediately seized by the soldiers and roughly ill-treated. All the men were shot, among them Mr. Kimmer, Consul of Argentina.

"Nearly all the men of the suburb Leffe were massacred en masse. In another quarter twelve citizens were murdered in a cellar. In the Rue en Ile a paralytic was shot in his bath-chair, and in the Rue d'Enfer a boy, fourteen years old, was struck down by a soldier.

"The railway viaduct of the suburb Neffe became the scene of a bloody massacre. An old woman and all her children were shot in a cellar. A man sixty-five years old, his wife, a son and a daughter were placed against a wall and shot through the head. Other inhabitants of Neffe were placed in a boat, taken to the Rocher Bayard, and shot there; among them were a woman eighty-three years old and her husband.

"A number of men and women had been locked in the yard of the prison. . . . At six o'clock in the

evening a mitrailleuse was placed on the mountain and fired at them, an old woman and three others being killed.

"Whilst some soldiers committed these murders, others looted and wrecked the houses, smashed the safes or blew them up with dynamite. They forced their way into the Banque Centrale de la Meuse, seized the manager, Mr. Xavier Wasseige, and called upon him to open the safe. As he refused to do so, they tried to force it open, but in vain. Thereupon they took Mr. Wasseige and his two eldest sons to the Place d'Armes, where they and 120 of their fellow-citizens were shot by means of a mitrailleuse. The youngest three children of Mr. Wasseige were held by soldiers and forced to attend the slaughter of their father and brothers. We were also informed that one of the young Wasseiges lay dying for an hour and nobody dared to come to his assistance.

"After the soldiers had performed their duty as vandals and bandits they set the houses on fire. Soon the whole town was one immense pool of fire.

"All the women and children had been taken to a convent, where they were kept imprisoned for four days, without hearing of the fate of their beloved ones. They themselves expected to be shot in their turn. Round about them the burning of the town went on.

"The first day the religious were allowed to give them some food, although not sufficient. Soon they had nothing to eat but carrots and unripe fruit.

"The inquiry also brought to light that the German soldiers on the right bank, who were exposed to the fire of the French, hid themselves here and there behind civilians, women and children.

"In short the town of Dinant is destroyed. Of

1,400 houses, 200 only remained standing. The factories, where the labouring population got their bread and butter, were wrecked systematically. Many inhabitants were sent to Germany, where they are still kept as prisoners. The majority of the others are scattered all over Belgium. Those who stayed in the towns were starved.

"The committee has a list of the victims. It contains 700 names, and is not complete. Among those killed are seventy-three women and thirty-nine children between six months and fifteen years old.

"Dinant had 7,600 inhabitants, of whom ten per cent. were put to death; not a family exists which has not to mourn the death of some victims; many families have been exterminated completely."

When we entered the town in our motor-car, those of the unfortunate population who had escaped from the murderous massacre had already left the town. Between the ruins and the deserted French Red Cross cars we drove to the pontoon bridge which the Germans had flung across the river by the side of the Meuse bridge, which had been blown up. Here we were stopped by German soldiers who guarded the pontoon bridge. In a café we came across a few of the citizens who had remained. These unfortunate people had no home, no money, and no food, lacked the wherewithal to go farther away, and now depended on the charity of the murderers of their relatives. Twice a day they were allowed to call at one of the German stores for a piece of bread, in exchange for a ticket which they might get at the commander's office. The Germans,

upholders of morality and "Kultur," saw to it that their victims did not overeat themselves.

Our passport had to be stamped by this same commander, and my colleague had to ask him for a permit to take photographs. The commander would not hear of this, but finally agreed, after my colleague had snapshotted him and his staff in front of the office. Our passport was marked: "1. Landsturm Infantry Battalion, Dresden."

Dinant offered a terrible sight; it no longer existed. On foot, of course, we walked along the place where a large shop once stood, but one could not even distinguish where the road had been. Not one street was left, and the few houses that were saved are not in the centre of the town. On a slope on the left bank of the Meuse there had been two large monasteries, which had been turned into hospitals. They had been wrecked completely by gun-fire, and as if in bitter mockery at the cruel fate, the Red Cross flags flew there still undamaged.

In the centre of the town everything, including the large buildings, had been levelled with the ground. This was the case with the principal church "de Notre Dame," the college of the same name, the "Belle Vue," the monasteries, etc., of the "Frères et Sœurs de Notre Dame," the "Saint Nicolas" and "Saint Pierre" churches, and three large factories, "Oudin," "Le Mérinos," and "La Dinant," the "Banque Centrale de la Meuse," the town-hall, the ancient "Palace of the Prince-Bishops," and all its archives, the magnificent post-and-telegraph office, the large hotels "de la Tête d'Or," "des Postes," "des Ardennes," "Moderne," "Terminus," the hotels

"de la Citadelle," "la Paix," "la Gare," etc., etc., the "Institut Hydrothérapique," all houses of the "Bon Secours" Congregation, etc.

The finest view of Dinant was from the beautiful bridge affording a passage across the Meuse with the "Notre Dame" in the background. This church was built just in front of a steep rock, on top of which stood the citadel of Dinant.

Now the bridge is blown up, the greater part of the church destroyed by the Germans, and, had nature not been more powerful than their brutal, clumsy violence, they would have pulled down that rock too. But it is still there, the solitary remnant of the famous beauty of Dinant.

My companion wanted to take a snapshot of this point, but in order to enliven the scene somewhat, he requested a few soldiers to stand in the square in front of the church. Each had a couple of champagne bottles hanging on his stomach, and refused absolutely to accede to my colleague's request to remove them. They insisted upon being snapshotted with those bottles hanging on their bodies! So my companion took this snapshot of "Kultur" in that condition, houses burned down, a church destroyed, and in front of these the grinning and coarse villains, puffing out their bodies, proud of their empty bottles. . . .

CHAPTER XII

ON THE BATTLE-FIELDS

As often as I went on tour to collect news on the scene of war, I got dozens of messages and letters, which alarmed people sent to the editor of *De Tijd,* with the request that they should be handed to me for further transmission to relatives. I took hundreds of them to and from Louvain.

On Monday, September 14th, I took with me a larger number than ever to Louvain.

I observed then already that much poverty prevailed, for in many places I noticed people whose appearance did not suggest that they were accustomed to that sort of work, creeping quietly in and out of hedges, carrying bags in which they put the potatoes picked up in the fields. Naturally they started and looked alarmed, when, suddenly, I passed on my bicycle.

Round about Louvain everything was prepared for defensive purposes, artillery being hidden under straw-roofs, only a few yards away from the farmhouses, and the sentries were very alert. I never saw them before I was quite near; then they jumped suddenly from behind a tree, summoning me to stop by lowering their rifle. In the meadows were a good many newly cut trenches.

Some soldiers were rather friendly when I revealed myself as a Netherland reporter; they informed me with serious faces that in Germany two million volunteers were drilling; that in each garrison-town the majority of the men were left behind as reserves; that by and by they were going to level Antwerp to the ground, if these Belgians would not keep quiet; that after all Belgium proved a bigger job than they had bargained for; that Amsterdam and Rotterdam had been shelled and Flushing taken by the British; that Germany had now sent a great number of troops into The Netherlands to protect her against Britain, because The Netherlands herself had no army at all; and so on and so on.

One of the soldiers took me to the spot where two days before the Belgians had blown up the railway which had just now been repaired by the German engineers. According to his story eighty troopers had succeeded in surprising a guard of twelve and in pushing on to the railway.

Near Corbeek-Loo a strong Belgian force had been able even to reach the main road to Louvain, and there also destroyed the railway, after which they retreated before the advancing Germans.

These minor actions formed part of the sortie by the Belgians from Antwerp. One division marched towards Louvain and occupied Aerschot on Thursday evening, September 10th. On Friday they advanced farther in the direction of Wijgmaal-Rotselair-Corbeek-Loo, with continuous hard fighting. On Saturday the fights were fiercest round about these places, and ended in the evening in a retreat of the Belgians, who made the enemy pay as heavily as

possible for their victory, although they themselves had to leave behind a good many victims.

Considerations of space forbid me to relate many of the heroic deeds performed on this occasion, but an exception may be made of the following:—

When I arrived in Louvain I heard of a young Fleming who was then being nursed in a hospital established by the Norbertine Fathers, and had been serving at two pieces of ordnance near Corbeek-Loo. As the army was forced to retreat in the evening his comrades were compelled to abandon the two guns, but he had to stay, being wounded in the leg by a grape shot. The Germans made him prisoner, and tied him to a tree. By an immense effort he succeeded in tearing himself loose, and dragged himself towards a farm-house. At a short distance from this goal he was stopped, however, by a German soldier. The Fleming, putting forth all his remaining strength, gave the other such a tremendous blow in the face with his rifle-butt that he fell down dead. Subsequently this boy reached the farm-house, where he was charitably received. Later on he was fetched away by the Sisters from Boven-Loo, and finally from that institution by the Norbertine Fathers.

The Belgians left also a considerable number of dead and wounded at Wijgmaal and Rotselair. On Tuesday, September 15th, I visited the battle-fields in that neighbourhood with father Coppens, a Netherland Norbertine, born at Lieshout. The wounds of the soldiers lying there were in a most terrible condition, because *the Germans forbade the removal of the Belgian wounded before all the*

German dead had been buried. In my opinion not only a proof of barbarity, but also an admission that the Germans themselves must have suffered great losses.

The Wijgmaal battle-field was after all the least horrible. About ten houses seemed to have been set on fire on purpose; the rest had suffered badly from the bombardment. All the inhabitants had fled as soon as the fighting began. The wounded Belgians had been placed in the large dancing-room of a café, where father Coppens brought them a large hamper full of eatables and drinkables, and whence also he had them transported to Louvain. The food was gratefully accepted, but they were still more eager to get hold of the mugs, as they were very thirsty in consequence of the high temperature caused by the inflamed wounds; often we had to prevent them forcibly from drinking too much.

We passed a dead field-officer who still laid hold of a piece of a flag. When I read that sort of thing in a book, I thought: "how pretty and romantic," but never believed that this would actually happen in war-time. I saw the reality now, and, deeply touched, bared my head, saluting that dead hero. From papers we found on him we saw that his name was Van Gesthel; like most Belgians, he had been killed by shell.

I went on with Father Coppens and found about one hundred wounded, of whom only a few had been taken to the houses. Most of them crept away frightened, but when we told them that we were Netherlanders from Louvain, who came to bring them food and drink, and to take them away to be

nursed, they got hold of our coats and refused to let us go.

They drank deep, in long draughts, with trembling lips, and beseeched us not to leave them again: "Oh, gentlemen, then we shall die!" We swore that we should come back, and that later on carriages would arrive from Louvain to take them to some convent or hospital; and, trusting us, they resigned themselves in the end.

Goats, pigs, cows, and other cattle roamed freely through the village-street, looking for food and licking the faces of the dead.

We entered a stable whence we thought that a sound came. We saw, however, nothing but a heap of straw, and a pig which ran up against us near the door. Father Coppens chased it away with a:

"Get you gone, you brute!"

And all at once the straw began to move, a head popped out, and a weak voice exclaimed:

"Ah well, be you a Fleming?"

The poor fellow had hidden himself, being afraid that we were Germans; but when he heard the "Get you gone, you brute!" he ventured to show himself.

"Certainly, my lad," said Father Coppens—"certainly we are Flemings. What is the matter with you?"

We removed the rest of the straw, undressed him partially, and on both his legs the most hideous wounds became visible. Septic process had worsened his condition to such an extent, that the unfortunate boy had only a short time to live. I moved away

. . . he confessed to Father Coppens, who gave him the viaticum, which he carried with him.

Later on people from Louvain came with carts, which we had ordered before leaving. Thirteen of these carried the wounded away, whilst a German patrol went all over the village, setting everything on fire.

Father Coppens and I beseeched the German commanding officer to spare the houses of some people, large families, who came for shelter to the father's convent. And at length, after long supplications, we secured exemption for a few houses, inhabited by people who could not have done anything in a village which had been completely evacuated by the population, at the beginning of the fight.

In the Hospital Leo XIII, that eager Netherlander, Professor Noyons, did all he could to save as many as could be saved of the wretched Belgian wounded; but as rain and cold had done so much harm to the wounds, amputation of the injured limbs was as a rule the only remedy left.

Never thinking of rest he went on day and night, taking away the poor fellows' arms and legs, and all this by the miserable light of some candles. Gas and electricity were not to be had, the works being idle after the destruction of the town. . . .

CHAPTER XIII

ROUND ABOUT BILSEN

ALTHOUGH at first I had a different plan, I decided on Saturday, September 26th, to go first to Riempst —a little walk of three hours each way—as I had read a report in certain papers quoted from the *Handelsblad van Antwerpen* that the church of Riempst had been burned and the vicars of that parish and of Sichem had been made prisoners.

Arrived at Riempst I found the pretty village church in its full glory and the vicar engaged in performing his religious functions; the vicar of Sichem was also still at home. The only part of the report that was true was that various burgomasters from the environs had been sent to Tongres and had not returned since. The burgomaster of Riempst, with whom I had been imprisoned already once, was being searched for by the Germans everywhere, but could not be found. In several places I heard also that the Belgians were lying in the woods round about, and that something was being prepared at Riempst; but no one knew what. So I decided to go and inquire.

The road was quite deserted, for the people, who live in great fear, do not venture out.

As far as Bilsen everything seemed equally de-

serted, but quite near the town a couple of German soldiers suddenly came to me from behind a house, and ordered me to stop. They took me with them to the guard, which was established in the aforementioned house.

There it appeared that my papers were in good order, but at the same time I was informed that I was to be taken to the commanding officer at the station and could not be allowed to leave Bilsen for the present. I was escorted through the townlet, which appeared to be entirely deserted; but now and then somebody came to his front-door to watch the latest victim of the Germans being led past. At the station I was pushed without much courtesy into a keep where six other civilians sat, who had been picked up as being at large, and whose faces were now covered with a cold perspiration from fear, because they were firmly convinced that by and by they would be shot.

Three soldiers stood before the open door and amused themselves by provoking these people in the most inhuman manner, by abusing them and telling them that later on they would be hanged or shot. The poor fellows shivered and their teeth clattered. I, the newly arrived "swine," was treated in much the same way, but I reduced the insolent blusterers into the quietest people of the world by warning them that by and by I would ask the commanding officer whether his soldiers had the right to call a Netherlander a "swine." That put some heart into my fellow-victims, and I urged them that they would do best by replying calmly to any questions which the commanding officer might put to them. They

actually became more composed, and told me the following:

The Germans had evacuated Bilsen some days ago, probably after being informed that a strong force of Belgians was coming on. As a matter of fact, only eleven Belgian soldiers had entered the townlet. These had pulled down the German flag from the town-hall and replaced it by the Belgian. The station and the railway were then closed to the public for a couple of hours, and in that time they pulled up the rails in two places. On Friday evening the Germans returned in great numbers by train from Tongres, and the train derailed on one of those places; but no lives were lost, as it went very slowly.

The Germans had then taken it into their heads that the Belgians occupied Bilsen and the station, and began a terrific fire at the station and the surrounding houses, although there was not a single Belgian soldier in the whole town. When they had satisfied themselves that this was the case, they stopped firing, and were furious on account of the derailing and the mistake they had made. They then started a wild hunt for the men, and set about ten houses on fire, as also the signalman's cottage, because he had not warned them of the danger by waving his red flag.

They made no allowance for the fact that they themselves had relieved all railway officials of their functions until later notification. The signalman was made a prisoner, but released subsequently.

As soon as they began to chase the men, the greater part of the inhabitants fled in dire fear, most of

them towards the Campine. In the fields and the shrubberies the Germans must have killed a good many of the male fugitives, and made the others prisoners. Among the latter were my six fellow-victims.

That same Friday evening the women and children living in the Rue de la Station were told to leave their houses as the whole street was to be burned down. Everybody fled, but the design was not executed. The burgomaster and his son were taken prisoners, and brought to Tongres; later on the son was released; the Very Reverend the Dean was also arrested.

The latter himself told me that he was released in order to instruct the vicars in the eighteen parishers of his deanery that they should inform their parishioners that the whole village would be burned and the inhabitants killed if the railway-line should be broken up, no matter whether it were done by Belgian soldiers or others.

After I had been incarcerated for about two hours I was taken to the commanding officer, Major Krittel, or rather to one of his subordinates, Captain Spuer, who was having a violent altercation with his chief. The captain appeared to insist with great force that the whole place should be burned down and all the prisoners shot. But the major seemed to be a tolerably reasonable man, tried to soothe the captain, and at last put down his foot, saying that he had had enough. The captain, a rude, fat fellow, sat down at a desk and bellowed at me:

"Here, swine!"

I did not budge.

"Here, swine!"

"I am a Netherlander."

"Netherlander? Doesn't matter. Have you got papers? All right. You shan't have those back."

"Then I'll lodge a complaint with the Imperial Governor of Liège, who gave me the papers."

"Swine!"

Now the major jumped up and shouted at his subordinate that he had to treat a Netherlander as he ought to be treated.

The major, sitting at another desk, took my further examination upon himself, apologising for the "noisy" conduct of his subordinate, who had got somewhat over-excited in consequence of the circumstances. He found my papers in perfect order, and told me in civil tones that I should get back my liberty which I had lost in consequence of a misunderstanding, but that for the present I was not allowed to leave Bilsen, as I should run the greatest risk of being shot by German or Belgian patrols, who were hidden along the road. He asked me to call again the next morning.

I availed myself of his benevolent mood and told him that my fellow-prisoners were treated very unkindly by his soldiers, and these people had lost their composure entirely in consequence. A calm examination, I told him, undoubtedly would give him also the conviction that these people had only fled into the fields because they were afraid, but not with any criminal intent. He promised me to conduct the examination himself, and to be as kind as possible. The next morning I heard that they had all been released.

I now tried to get something to eat in the town at an hotel.

"Well, what have you got for me to eat?"

"To eat, sir—to eat? A bit of bacon . . . that's all."

"Well, that's all right; and what am I going to have with it, bread, potatoes, or . . . "

"Bread, potatoes? Nothing. We have nothing."

I went to various other places, but there I could not even get a bit of bacon. So I made up my mind to starve for the present, and to make inquiries here and there about families whose acquaintances or friends had asked me to do so through the editor of *De Tijd*.

Afterwards I sauntered through the very quiet little town, until I suddenly saw something quite uncommon, namely two civilians who, like myself, were walking about. When I came near, one of them recited a rhyme:

> "Ah, there comes Mister Tijd, and he
> Lost like ourselves his liberty!"

I had not the faintest idea who they were, but then they introduced themselves as van Wersch and Dasoul, both living at the time at Hasselt. The first had been at Maastricht a couple of days ago and had seen me there. He told me that that morning he had been "hooked" and his companion only the evening before. He had come to Bilsen on a bicycle, and got such a blow on his back from the butt of a German rifle that the butt was cracked in two although his back was not injured.

He had been uneasy because he experienced no disagreeable consequences of that blow, and had therefore consulted the doctor at Bilsen, who thought that only his excited nerves had enabled him to withstand such a blow. Both had been locked up a couple of hours and their bicycles had been taken away, as also their papers. Mr. van Wersch, however, had an acquaintance at Bilsen with whom he and his companion found lodgings, and whither he was good enough to take me as well.

After a bed had been promised me, my first request was for something to eat, for I had not enjoyed anything as yet. But there was nothing left, absolutely nothing. I scratched my head, and rubbed my empty stomach, when suddenly I heard a fowl cackling outside. Negotiations about it were soon finished; my companion was to kill the fowl, whereas I was to call on Major Krittel and tell him that I liked my enforced stay in Bilsen very much, but that he ought to see now that I got something to eat.

I returned with two large round "brown Georges" —soldiers' loaves.

Never did I enjoy a meal so much; but not so the kind people who had received us so friendly; they could not eat. The terror which reigned among the population in those days was indescribable. One must have seen it and gone through it with them, to realise it. They really feared that at any moment the Germans would drive the population out of the houses and set the town on fire.

Men and women in the prime of life sat on their chairs, gazing vacantly at nothing, lacking in the

most literal sense of the word the strength to stand or to walk. When at about six o'clock in the evening the click-clack of rifle-fire was heard—for a Belgian patrol seemed to have come near the town,—my hostess and her daughter pressed a couple of papers against their breast, full of fear, ready to fly, but unable to walk.

That same afternoon also I made the acquaintance of the editor of a local weekly, *De Bilsenaar,* which was not allowed to appear during the occupation of the place by the Germans. He and others had a great many things to tell me.

Not half of the requisitioned meat was used by the Germans, and the rest was simply left to rot, whilst the starving people were not allowed to touch it. Two pigs and a cow were shot in a meadow, but no part of these animals had been used, the order to bury them being given when the smell became unendurable. In some places the Germans indulged in such unspeakably filthy acts, that it is impossible to mention details.

When the Germans entered Bilsen for the first time, four persons were shot in front of the town-hall; fifteen holes were still to be seen in the wall. Amongst these four was also the brother-in-law of the editor of the *Bilsenaar.* He was dragged out of his house, accused of having shot, although he and his wife and children were at that moment saying the rosary. His wife had got up that day for the first time after her confinement.

The unhappy man asserted in a loud voice that he was innocent, but got the answer that he would have to prove that later on. But he never had a

chance of doing that. Arriving at the market-place, he and three others were simply placed against the wall and shot. He could not even have spiritual assistance.

Frequently Protestant services were held in the market-place, conducted by a parson, and the invariable beginning and end of that parson's allocution was: "There is one God; there must also be one Kaiser."

A good many lads had been able to escape from Bilsen and the environs to Antwerp; in the aggregate, 500 from this district, and more went every day. They were driven to the Belgian army by all they had seen and experienced. Often one heard women and girls say: "Oh, if I were a man, if I were a boy, I should be in the army to-morrow!"

I was sitting comfortably in the home circle of the editor of *De Bilsenaar,* with father, mother, and daughter. They had one son of eighteen, who was at the Junior Seminary at Hasselt, and only the first Sunday in August he had left for Heereth in order to offer himself as a missionary aspirant. The next Wednesday the would-be missionary, an only son, enlisted as a volunteer in the Belgian army. . . . He was already the sixteenth of his form of twenty-three boys at the college at Hasselt.

The father got up and went to a small cupboard from which he took some papers, and his eyes, and those of his wife and daughter, became moist at once; letters from their only boy, written on the battle-field! He read them out with a broken voice, frequently interrupted by sobs. I said nothing, could not utter a word.

The boy also had been obliged to retire into France, had been transported from Rheims to Havre, and from there, across the sea, back to Belgium. "Five times already, my dear parents, I have been in the fight; I have asked them not to let me wait long for the sixth. Oh, you cannot imagine how glorious it is to be allowed to fight for my country! Have confidence in the future, dear parents, and say a paternoster for me and my comrades and also one for our Fatherland."

Well, I could not keep calm when I heard such things read by a father from a letter of his only son on the battle-field; that is impossible.

The next morning was Sunday, and the bells summoned the people to church. But nobody went, nobody dared to appear in the street, although prayer-book and rosary are always in everybody's hands during these days. I had decided to go to the second Mass, but as nobody had come to the first, there was no second. The Dean himself said that the people were quite right not to come to church. The previous Sunday the Germans, who had entered Lanaeken suddenly, had posted themselves in front of the church, where the believers attended Holy Mass, and ordered the women and children to leave the church, but the men to stay. When all the women and children had left, the Germans entered the building and . . . found not a single man, for all had left quickly by the back door. A veritable battue was held in the whole district for lads and young man, who were all taken away as prisoners by the Germans, because during the last few days

great numbers had escaped to the north and enlisted as volunteers in the army.

I went to the commander's office, and on the way copied the following Proclamation:—

"PROCLAMATION

"Private motor-cars, motor-bicycles, and bicycles are only allowed to move about in the districts occupied by the German army if driven by German soldiers, or the chauffeur possesses a licence. These licences are only issued by the local commanders, and only in urgent cases. The motor-cars, motor-bicycles, and bicycles will be seized if this rule is infringed. Anyone who tries to push through the German outposts shall be shot at, as also anyone who approaches them in such a manner that he seems to be a spy.

"Should telegraph- or telephone-wires be cut in the neighbourhood of towns and villages, these places will be sentenced to pay a war-contribution, whether the inhabitants are guilty or not.

"The Governor-General of Belgium.

"Baron Von der Goltz,
"Field-Marshal."

At the station Major Krittel was engaged in examining a civilian and his wife. The man had been found in a field; both shook from nervous excitement and wept profusely. The major spoke calmly and encouragingly, and after a short examination both got their liberty. Major Krittel was also very kind to me again, but asked emphatically whether I knew that writing false news exposed me to the danger of capital punishment. I answered that I was firmly convinced of that. He then gave me

another proclamation to read in which this was mentioned, and I asked and got permission to put the document in my pocket. It runs as follows:—

"TONGRES.
"24.9.1914,

"PROCLAMATION

"Several cases which occurred in the Province of Limburg oblige me to acquaint the inhabitants of a number of regulations:

"According to Clause 58, Section 1, of the Military Penal Code, sentence of capital punishment for treason will be pronounced against those who, intending to assist an enemy army, or to injure the German army:

"1. Commit a punishable offence mentioned in Clause 90 of the German Penal Code.

"2. Injure or make useless roads or telegraphic instruments.

"3. Serve the enemy as guides in a military undertaking against the German allied forces, or mislead the latter when serving them as guides.

"4. Who in whatever way in order to harass or mislead the German forces make military or other signals, urge to flee, or prevent the reunion of straggling soldiers.

"5. Who undertake to enter into verbal or written communication with persons in the army or the fleet, of the enemy country at war with Germany, about matters relating to the war itself.

"6. Who distribute in the German army hostile incitements or communications.

"7. Who neglect necessary precautions which ought to be taken on behalf of the army.

"8. Liberate prisoners of war.

"According to Clause 90 of the German Penal Code, sentence of penal servitude for life will be pronounced against those:

"1. Who surrender to the enemy, either German troops or fortified bulwarks, trenches or fortified places, or defences, as also parts or belongings of the German army.

"2. Who surrender to the enemy of the German forces defensive works, ships or transports of the fleet, public funds, stocks of arms, munitions, or other war material, as also bridges, railways, telegraphs, or other means of communication; or who destroy them or make them useless on behalf of the enemy.

"3. Supply men to the enemy or entice away others who belong to the German army.

"4. Who serve the enemy as a spy, lodge hostile spies, hide them or aid them.

"And it is also to be noticed that it is forbidden to distribute newspapers and other printed matter published in the part of Belgium not occupied by German forces. It is forbidden to take communications of whatever kind from these parts of Belgium and those that are occupied by the German army. These offences will be punished with imprisonment. Serious cases, as, for example, any attempt to assist the hostile forces, will be followed by sentence of death.

"STERZEL,
"Major and Commanding Officer."

I had also to promise the major that on my return I should bring with me a copy of *De Tijd* in which all I had experienced and seen in Bilsen was described, and also a box of Netherland cigars,

which he promised to pay for; then I was allowed to go.

As I went a patrol marched out—reinforcements had again come from Tongres—whose task was to clear the district of the enemy. The patrol consisted of six Death-head hussars, about forty bicyclists, and the rest infantry, altogether about four hundred men, who were able to keep together, because the hussars and the cyclists proceeded very slowly and cautiously in the direction of Lanaeken. I went with them, chatting with one of the officers. As soon as they had got to the road, the greatest caution was observed. The hussars went in front, followed by some of the infantry, all in loose formation, continually looking about in all directions, with the finger at the cock of the rifle.

Not a single person was seen on the road, and everything went well until we got to the village of Veldwezelt. Suddenly, quite unexpectedly, a violent rifle fire and a continued whistling of bullets was heard from the neighbourhood of a house close by. Although the soldiers later on asserted to the contrary, I was sure that the firing did not come from the house, but from some underwood near by.

After some firing one of the hussars was hit and fell from his horse, which ran away. A few seconds later another hussar was hit in his arm and his horse in its hind-part. Rider and horse flew away from the fire. The Germans had, of course, immediately answered the firing, and pulled me with them behind the bend of the road, where I lay down with them flat on the ground. A Belgian soldier who came out of the shrubbery with three others was shot, but

as the firing went on for some time and the hussars and cyclists began to take to their heels, some order was given, and the Germans jumped up and ran away in the direction of Bilsen. I was told to come with them, so I also ran, and we all arrived at Bilsen out of breath. As soon as they had recovered their breath they gave vent to their rage.

They yelled and shouted and said that Bilsen and the whole district must be burned down, that the major was far too kind, that they were cowardly soldiers who hid themselves in houses and dared not fight an honest fight in the open, that civilians had also been shooting, and so on. I pointed out that the firing did not come from the house, but from the shrubbery near the house; that nobody could have seen a civilian shooting. As they insisted, I said with a laugh that they had seen ghosts. That excited them so, that they came on to me in a rage, and asked whether this was a laughing matter? And they would surely have used violence had not the sergeant intervened.

I went immediately to the major to give him a detailed report of the occurrence, and I believe that I may say without boasting that owing to my intervention Veldwezelt was not burned down, although other frightful things happened there.

The hussar who was first hit, died later on. The other appeared to be only slightly wounded in the arm.

Of course I had to remain at Bilsen after this adventure. The major appeased his men somewhat, mounted a ridiculously small horse, and marched out at the head of his men. Two hundred men who had

just arrived from Tongres were added as reinforcements to the major's troops, who had now about six hundred men with him. Thus they went again to Veldwezelt, but the few Belgians, who were no fools, had left of course.

Towards evening the major returned with his men, who in loud voices sounded forth all sorts of patriotic songs, elated because they had driven away the enemy. As he entered I addressed the major, who with a grand sweep of his arm called out to me: "You may go now; I have cleared the whole district."

I was very curious to know what had happened in Veldwezelt. When I came near the village, I noticed great activity; men, women, and children were busy with saws and hatchets cutting down all the trees and shrubs along the road.

Beautiful hedges, which had been grown artificially in fine forms for years, fell under the blows of the hatchets. The reason? Before the day was over all hedges, all shrubs, and all trees had to be cut down, or the village would be set on fire. Still shaking and trembling in consequence of the terrors they had experienced during the day, old men, women, and children with red flushed cheeks joined in the work; they had not even taken time to change their Sunday- for their working-day clothes.

And if that had been all! But dozens of boys and young men had been taken to Bilsen as prisoners. There had been a real hunt for all able-bodied lads who might be of any use in the Belgian army. Women and old men were compelled by threats to betray the hiding-places of their sons or husbands,

and if one of them was found hidden away under straw or in barns, he was ill-treated or beaten with rifle-butts. Some fled to Maastricht, others to the Campine, the northern part of Belgium. I presume that both groups have at length arrived in Antwerp.

Dr. Beckers, Government veterinary surgeon at Veldwezelt, had also been taken to Bilsen as a hostage. The Germans asserted that the Belgians in Lanaeken had taken prisoner a German military veterinary surgeon who looked after the horses, and now intended to keep Dr. Beckers until the Belgians should have released the German military veterinary surgeon.

During the occupation a war contribution of 150,000 francs in silver had been imposed on Bilsen, although there was hardly any silver left in the place. This punishment was inflicted because Belgian soldiers had destroyed the railway in two places.

Near Lanaeken I met suddenly a Belgian soldier, who did not trouble me after I had shown him my papers. I was quite astonished to find that man there all by himself, whilst so many Germans were only a few miles away. When I asked whether he knew this, he answered:

"Yes."

"Are you not afraid?"

"No."

"But when the Germans come!"

"Then I shall shoot."

"But that will mean death for yourself."

"What does that matter? What do I care for life? I come from Dinant; they have murdered my

dear parents, burned our house. What good is it to me to be alive? I requested them to give me this dangerous outpost. When the Germans come, I'll shoot, and then my comrades at Lanaeken will be warned. Then I'll kill three or four of them, but after that I shall be ready to die myself."

The man looked at me with glittering eyes full of the passion of revenge. I pressed his hand and went on.

Lanaeken seemed to have been reoccupied by the Belgians, after the occurrences of the previous Sunday. When I entered the place, I found the greater number of the men round about the station.

The Belgians who had fired at the Germans near Veldwezelt had also come back there. They were eleven motor-cyclists who had been reconnoitring; when near Veldwezelt they saw the Germans approach and hid themselves in the shrubberies, intending to attack them. The only wounded person they had was only slightly hurt, and within a few days he would be able to rejoin his comrades.

Mr. van Wersch, whom I mentioned above, and who shared imprisonment with me at Bilsen, had a rather disagreeable adventure a few days afterwards, when he had the misfortune of being mistaken for the war-correspondent of *De Tijd*.

My letter to that paper about what had happened in Bilsen seemed to have reached the German authorities at that place, and these gentlemen were not at all pleased with it. When Mr. van Wersch came back to the place a few days afterwards he was mistaken for myself, and arrested at once.

After having been searched all over, he was es-

corted by a sergeant and two soldiers to Tongres, where they took him to Captain Spuer, the same fat officer who, so kindly, had called me a "swine."

When they arrived at Tongres, the captain happened to have returned to Bilsen, whither the prisoner was brought back by the same escort. But Captain Spuer seemed not to be found there either, in consequence of which the major allowed Mr. van Wersch at last to go on.

When he passed the village of Veldwezelt he met a motor-car . . . in which was Captain Spuer. He recognised his victim at once, and also mistook him for the war correspondent of *De Tijd*. Mr. van Wersch was immediately detained again, and taken to a farm-house in the neighbourhood, where he was threatened with a revolver, and roared at: "You are the correspondent of *De Tijd*."

Mr. van Wersch denied this of course, but nevertheless they took him to Bilsen in the motor-car. There he was searched once more, the Netherland letters he had with him were taken away, as also 1,800 francs. But when he was released they gave him back the money.

Mr. van Wersch was told that they intended to send him to Tongres, but after a deliberation between Captain Spuer and Major Krittel, a very kind man as I have already remarked, he was allowed to stay at Bilsen until the examination should be over. He was allowed to walk through the townlet under military escort at first, but later entirely free, and to sleep at the station under military guard. After another search, he was at last allowed to leave for Maastricht on Monday morning.

CHAPTER XIV

DURING THE SIEGE OF ANTWERP

MANY days before the Germans marched upon Antwerp I announced the siege in my paper. In Louvain I had seen all the preparations and also the arrival of the Austrian 30·5 cm. which were intended to batter to ruins the bulwark of the national defence.

As soon as the siege had begun, I tried to join the Germans, viâ Louvain, and left Maastricht again by motor-car. Only a few miles from the Netherland frontier I met the first soldiers, Belgians. When they saw the Orange flag with the word "Nederland," they let us pass without any trouble. A little farther on the road walked a civilian, who, by putting up his hands, requested or commanded us to stop. We took the most prudent part, and did stop. The man asked in bad Dutch to be allowed to drive on with us to Brussels, but the motor was not going beyond Tirlemont; outside that place motor-traffic was forbidden. The stranger got in all the same, in order to have a convenient journey at least so far.

My new companion tried desperately to speak as good Dutch as possible, but failed in the most de-

plorable manner; every time pure German words came in between. He told a story that he stayed at Maastricht as a refugee, and now wanted to fetch his children from a girls' boarding-school at Brussels. I pretended to believe every word, and after he had forgotten the first story he made up another, saying that he came from Liège, where some officers who were billeted on him were kind enough to give him a chance of going to Brussels, to purchase stock for his business.

When we were stopped by German outposts he put out of the window a paper at which they just glanced, stood to attention, and said that all was well. They did not even want to see my papers. In a casual way I asked what a miraculous sort of paper he had, and then he pretended that, by the help of those officers who were quartered on him, he had got a certificate from the Governor of Liège with the order to treat him with great respect and also to allow him to travel by military trains if the opportunity happened to offer itself.

In Tongres it was necessary to get a passport signed, and pay three marks each, and ten marks for the motor. But the office of the commander was not open before three o'clock in the afternoon, according to the soldiers who were doing sentry-go in front of the town-hall. Wait till three o'clock? No fear! My companion showed his miraculous paper again, and was allowed to go in, but only by himself. I gave him my papers and those of the chauffeur, and also wanted to give him sixteen marks, three each for the chauffeur and myself and ten for the motor, but he said that that was unnecessary.

Within twenty minutes the fellow came back with our verified passports on which the words "Paid: Free" were written.

A lot of artillery and a great number of soldiers were in the market-place ready to start. The commander sent one of his officers to us, who addressed me, examined my papers, and then said that I had surely met Belgian soldiers on the way. Of course I denied this emphatically.

"Don't you know then whether there are Belgian military in Vroenhoven?"

"No."

"And in Lanaeken?"

"I know nothing about that."

"Didn't hear either about it?"

"No."

Evidently he seemed to confide in me, and told me that they had been ordered to clear the north-east corner of Belgium of enemies, and that by and by they were going to march upon Lanaeken first of all.

When he was gone I gazed for some moments in silence at all these men and guns, destined to go and destroy by and by the heroes, who have done so much harm to the Germans, under command of the brave lieutenant Count de Caritat, burgomaster of Lanaeken. I thought of that brave Belgian from Dinant whom I met on his solitary outpost outside Lanaeken, and if I had acted according to my heart's desire, I should have sneaked away to the threatened point in order to warn those courageous men of the appoaching disaster.

My mysterious companion touched my shoulder

and asked whether we should not go on. "All right," I said, and we got in again.

At Tirlemont they were very busy rebuilding the burnt houses, although all day long the air shook from the heavy roar of the cannon near Antwerp.

I sent the motor back to The Netherlands, and went with my companion to the commander's office, where we got a permit to go on by military train.

From the side of Brussels many soldiers arrived at the station, who had all been wounded near Antwerp.

After a long time we were able to enter a train taking numerous new troops to Antwerp. We occupied a first-class compartment, which looked like a cattle-truck: pieces of bread, paper, cigar-ends, and tobacco were lying on the floor and the seats; the ledges of the windows were full of candle-grease.

We jogged on to Louvain at a rate of not quite three miles an hour. Here and there we had to wait a half or a whole hour to let trains from Brussels pass. The reason why the train went so slowly was because a week before a Belgian patrol had daringly broken through the outposts and destroyed the railway near Lovenjool. That village was then burned down completely and the vicar made a prisoner.

Near Louvain the train had to stop for another two hours, before it was allowed to enter the station, which was quite close by. I thanked my stars that at last I got rid of my companion, who travelled on to Brussels, whereas I got out at Louvain. It was too late to be allowed to walk in the streets, but the commander gave me an escort of two soldiers,

who were to take me to the mission house of the Fathers of the Sacred Heart.

It was very cold that evening, and the outposts at Heverlee had all wrapped themselves up in blankets. Once or twice we were stopped, but the password of my escort removed all difficulties.

"Is it much farther?" one of my armed guides asked.

"No, only a couple of minutes."

"I am thirsty. I should like very much to have a glass of beer."

"Yes," I replied, "but everything is closed."

"Yes, yes, but we shall like it also to-morrow, hi, hi, hi!"

It is as if the curse of drink always pursued the garrison in Louvain, for when and wherever I met German soldiers in that town, or came into touch with them, they were always drunk. That evening, also, I was glad when I arrived at the mission house, tipped the men, and got rid of them until the next day.

The Fathers were already in bed, but I soon got them out again. Within ten minutes I was enjoying what, in the circumstances, was a splendid meal, and the Fathers were absorbed in the daily and illustrated papers which I had brought for them.

The conditions at Louvain were the same as some weeks ago: hunger and misery. Some male prisoners had come back, and also over 150 female prisoners, who for more than a month had been in captivity in the Munster Camp. During the last days a real reign of terror ruled. Hostages were continually claimed, and nearly always they took clerics. The

week before the people had feared a new destruction. It was said that there had been shooting again, but happily the inquiry showed that a German soldier did it, and he was punished. The shot had been fired in front of the Josephite convent.

. . . . . .

A remarkable strike had taken place in the Leo XIII Hospital. The head of this institution, Dr. Tits, also had been taken as a hostage. It was the most blackguardly act one can think of, to take away the man who had spent night and day mostly nursing wounded Germans. Dr. Noyons found it so harsh that he took counsel with the other doctors, and they decided not to resume work before Dr. Tits came back. This of course happened immediately.

The man who bears the full responsibility for the destruction of Louvain, General von Manteuffel, had left already when I visited the town this time, and nobody has ever been able to find out what became of him. The latest proclamations were all signed: "By order of the General Government of Brussels—the Etappe-Commander."

Louvain was of course on tenterhooks about the course of the siege of Antwerp, but everybody was quite confident that this fortress would withstand a long, long time, although they saw quite well that the German attack was very fierce, for the tremendous roar of the cannon never ceased for a moment.

A walking excursion of one day took me to Brussels. I might have done it in a few hours less, but I lost my way in the wood-paths near Brussels, for at a certain moment I read on a finger-post, "Brussels four miles"; and after walking for a long time,

and wondering whether I should ever finish those four miles, I read suddenly: "Brussels—eight miles!" That gave me such a shock that once more I had nearly taken the wrong way.

I put all my hope on a car that loomed up in the distance. It was assisting in the reprovisioning of Brussels, and only for that reason had the carman got permission to use it. I signalled to him, and he stopped—a big lout of a man who evidently had had a drop too much; he would not allow me to ride on with him, because he preferred to remain alone on his car than to help a spy. "I am a Belgian, a Belgian, and not a traitor, not a traitor of my country," he assured me, with a lot of beery tears. In any case the man meant well, and probably he had tried to drown his troubles in drink.

In other circumstances I should not have taken so much trouble, but I was so tired that I gave the man all my papers to make him see that I was a Netherland journalist. But according to him that didn't matter at all, because the Netherlanders were quite as dirty as the Germans, for they had allowed the enemies of Belgium to pass through their country, and so on. In a torrent of words I told him that there was not a word of truth in it, and that the Belgian Government would surely lose no time in declaring the same as soon as the country was free again. At last I appealed to his heart by relating all the Netherlanders had done for the Belgians. This had the desired effect, and I was allowed to drive home with him.

At every inn he felt thirsty, and made me feel quite clearly that I had every reason to treat him.

And every time that we went back to our seats he said again:

"Yes, but now you see if after all you are a spy, you see, then, you see, I'll knock you down, you see?"

"Yes, yes, but now listen; I have told you already that . . ."

"But don't you see if you should, don't you see, you see I am a patriot."

"Oh, but listen: my papers . . ."

"Yes, but you see they may be forged, you see. They may shoot me, you see, but a traitor, you see, no, then I would knock you down, you see . . ."

That happened each time that he started again, and I was more tired by trying to convince this man than if I had walked all the rest of the way to Brussels. But after all I got there.

There was much more liveliness in the Belgian capital than during my first visit; it was as if the bombardment of Antwerp had wakened the people out of their slumber, an apparent slumber only, for no citizens were ever more faithful to the Belgian cause than those of Brussels.

There was shouting enough in the streets and on the boulewards; here hawkers tried to sell maps of the Fortress of Antwerp; there women and girls offered scarf-pins with the portrait of Burgomaster Max. Everybody had such a pin, and I soon sported one too, for only then did these lady-sellers leave me alone.

The German proclamations in Brussels were nearly as numerous as the Max pins. They showered them during the last days on the town, the one

more insolent than the other. After reading those things, a proclamation by Burgomaster Max affected me beneficially, whenever I could find one amongst the mass of other bills posted on the walls. Such a document testified to a grand soul and a firm character, which vindicated courageously the rights of the oppressed people.

In the streets and in the cafés I saw a great many marines who had taken part in the fights near Antwerp and were sent to Brussels for a few days' rest. It was remarkable that so many of them who had only lately looked death in the face, thought that they could not amuse themselves better than by mixing with girls of the worst description. Although I cannot, of course, always believe what soldiers, fresh back from a fight, assert in their over-excited condition, I assumed that I might conclude that things went badly with the defence of Antwerp.

A trip from Brussels to the scene of the fight convinced me still more. I passed some time with the artillery which had already silenced Waelhem, and was now used against the other defences. The sight of such an action was less interesting than one might think, as I could not get to the places where the infantry were storming. Only the thunder of all these guns overwhelmed and gave me an idea of the terror that was created.

From Antwerp, which I could see clearly from the positions of the artillery near Waelhem, high columns of smoke rose up from the Belgian artillery, which was harassing the German positions.

Here I also saw in action one of the 30·5 cm. Austrian howitzers mentioned before. The clumsy

monster was constantly being shunted on a rail forward and backward, and at long intervals sent a gigantic projectile to the threatened quarters. The sound was terrific, and the pressure of the air made people at a great distance tremble on the ground. The Austrian artillerists were still equipped as if they had to fight in a rough, mountainous country; the soles of their shoes were all over covered with hob-nails.

The Red Cross Service was well arranged, the wounded were transported regularly, a large number of motor-cars being used.

All soldiers and officers took the siege of the great fortress calmly, convinced that at the most it would be able to hold out for very few days. Reliable information soon gave me the same impression, although I had wished it might have been quite different. When I left the scene of the fight all the forts from Waelhem to St. Cathérine-Waver had been silenced and in the hands of the Germans, who would soon attack the inner circle of forts.

In Brussels the people seemed to be of a different opinion. German reports about successes obtained were simply not believed, and people persisted in their opinion that Antwerp would be invincible. The more reports of victories the Germans posted on the walls, the more excited people became, and palmed off upon each other all sorts of victories of the Allies.

At the Café Quatre Bras, near Tervueren, the innkeeper told me that the Germans had asked the Netherland Government for permission to place a 42 cm. on Netherland territory in order to be able

to shell Antwerp also from that side, but that the Netherland Government had refused. I tried as hard as possible to explain to the man that all stories of such requests were mere gossip. When more and more people entered the café I withdrew into a corner. They were all very excited, and some of them had drunk more than was good for them. They related with violent gesticulations that the Allies had surrounded Brussels and might be expected to enter the town at any moment, that all was over with the Germans, and so on. Shouts of "Vive la Belgique!" and "Vive notre roi!" sounded until suddenly I drew their attention. They looked me up and down critically, and one of them asked:

"Who are you?"

"A Netherland journalist, who is trying to get news for his paper."

"What, a Netherlander!—a Netherlander! All traitors! You are helping the Germans, but we are not afraid of either German or Netherlander."

They crowded threateningly round me, getting more and more excited.

I saw that I must act, and jumped on a chair.

"What," I exclaimed, "you dare to say that the Netherlanders act with the Germans? No, shall I tell you something? The Germans have asked the Netherland Government for permission to place a 42 cm. gun on their territory to shell Antwerp from that side, but the Netherland Government have refused."

"Lies, gossip."

"Lies, gossip? Ask the proprietor."

"Yes, men, what the gentleman says is true."

The rest was lost to me, for the men crowded round the innkeeper, who now aired his knowledge about the occurrence and evidently spoke with true conviction. At the end of the conversation they took their tankards from the bar, and shouted and cried: "Ah, well, if that is so, vive la Hollande! vive la Belgique! vive notre roi!" Suddenly we were the best of friends.

In Louvain people would not believe that Antwerp was on the point of surrendering, and persisted in the opinion that the fortress would hold out much longer, and was in a better position than ever before.

The German officers at the commander's office were elated in consequence of the reports received, and also told me that Antwerp would not be able to hold out for more than two days. They also tried to explain this to the people in the hall who were waiting for their passports. I followed the conversation, but not very closely, and one of the officers explained on a map what he asserted. Willy-nilly, because they had to get their passports, the waiting people listened to him. Suddenly I heard him say: "And after all we might have surrounded Antwerp also on the north by crossing Netherland territory, as we did when we invaded Belgium."

Those words gave me a shock, for I had heard that German officers always tried to encourage the Belgians in their wrong opinion about the alleged violation of Netherland neutrality, but I had not been able to believe it. With an innocent face I asked the officer:

"Where did the Germans cross Netherland territory?"

"Near Maastricht. You know where Maastricht is?"

And he summoned me to look at the map, where he pointed out to me where Maastricht was.

"Hullo!" I said, "but in those days I was in and about Maastricht, but I never noticed anything of it."

"And yet it is so. Are you perhaps a Netherlander?"

"Oh yes, I am a Netherland journalist."

"Is that so? I beg your pardon, but won't you come with me? I suppose that you want a passport. I will take you to the commander."

He was quite upset, and evidently thought that the best plan was to muzzle me by taking me away from the others as quickly as possible.

I asked and got the commander's permission to travel to Liège by military train, and from there to The Netherlands, not only for myself, but also for a Netherland girl of nine years, whose parents in Amsterdam had repeatedly and persistently asked me to see whether there would be any possibility of letting their little girl come back from a Louvain boarding-school. The Sisters with whom she was let her go with me when I showed them a letter from her father. That child had already seen a good deal! The Sisters had fled with all the children at the time of the conflagration, and hidden themselves for days in a farm in the neighbourhood.

During the last days hundreds of lads had left Louvain for The Netherlands, and the migration

went on throughout the whole occupied part of Belgium. It was the exodus of the levies of 1914 and 1915, who had been called up, and many of whom had been sent to Germany as prisoners. The Germans themselves had not a little furthered the flight of these crowds; by proclamations they had warned the lads not to try to escape, for otherwise all of the levies of '14 and '15 would be taken prisoners, and the parents of the fugitives would be punished. At Heverlee and Louvain the lads of both levies had to present themselves every Friday at this station. The consequence was that the following Friday not one single boy of those levies was to be found in either place.

No more wounded were taken to the hospitals of Louvain, as it had been decided to send them straight on to Germany for the present; yet there were many wounded men who were being nursed there already, and the doctors had their hands full attending to the wounded who passed the town. Dr. Noyons told me that the previous Sunday a train with 600 wounded had arrived from Northern France, and he and his assistants had been requested "just" to dress the wounds again of some of them. The condition of these unfortunate men must have been awful; not one had a dressing less than eight days old. Most of them had had it on much longer, and then these were merely emergency dressings. They were laid on straw in cattle trucks, many of them even in filth, and infection had worsened their condition to a great extent. Dr. Noyons and his colleagues tried to give the poor fellows as much relief as possible, but as a matter of course they

could not do very much during a short stay at a station.

The general condition of the town was not calmer during these last days. New hostages were taken continually, and generally, as before, they were clerics, in consequence of which the religious services were in a continual muddle, and sometimes on Sundays no Holy Mass could be said. Burgomaster Nerinx had now posted proclamations in which he called for volunteers to serve as temporary hostages, instead of the priests, during the hours of religious service. As if it were office work they mentioned: "The service begins in the afternoon at . . . o'clock and will end after . . . days at . . . o'clock."

It was self-evident that very few were keen to offer themselves as temporary substitutes for the clerics.

I have, happily, not seen much of the distressing flight of the Antwerp population, as I happened to be at Liège when the fortress fell into German hands. I went to Zundert viâ Maastricht and Breda, in order to go to the conquered fortress from that Netherland frontier-town, north-east of Antwerp.

A good many refugees were on their way to The Netherlands, but the bulk of the crowd had passed before my visit along the long road which I walked now in the opposite direction. I did not arrive in Antwerp before nightfall and was then very tired. The town was dark, dismal, and deserted, and only German soldiers went about in the streets, apparently looking in vain for a shop or café where they might find some diversion. I myself, exhausted by

a walk of twenty-five miles, sauntered along, constantly looking for some place or other to pass the night. Not a shop or hotel was open, and yet my stomach was craving for food, my body for rest. At last I met a policeman and told him of my difficulty.

"Yes, sir," he answered, "that will be difficult enough. Everybody has fled, even my own wife and children. I remained because I thought it was my duty, and now I have been tramping through the streets already for over twenty-four hours, without being relieved. It seems that by far the greater number of my colleagues fled also."

"Don't you think you could find me some hotel, or private people who might put me up?"

"I am very much afraid I shan't be able, but come along, and we'll try together."

So we went from street to street, without any result. He rang the bell at many houses where he knew that acquaintances lived, but always in vain, and at last the kind man had to give it up.

I went on by myself, and arrived at last in a street where I noticed a light in a house. When I came near, I stood opposite a small café, with "Lodgings" over the door. I was hardly able to go on, and did not care whether it was "lodgings" or "hotel," if I could only get in somewhere.

But I did not stop long, for after a good look round it seemed the best to try and get away as quickly as possible, and in that I succeeded. One understands, however, that it was a terrific disappointment for a man so tired to leave again after thinking that he had at last found a place for

rest. At length I found an hotel near the Central Station.

Antwerp had suffered from the horror of war. The bombardment had destroyed many beautiful quarters almost entirely, and even damaged badly a number of hospitals. Of course the loss of many lives had to be deplored.

The next day I had the pleasure of an interview with Cardinal Mercier, whose residence in Antwerp I had been able to find out at last. A wealthy lady had offered his Eminence her grand house. In one of the rooms I waited for the arrival of the cardinal, the Metropolitan of the Belgian Church Provinces, who, both as a prelate and a patriot, had been tried so sorely in this war, which ravaged both his university town and his episcopal town. Although he was exceedingly busy, his Eminence had the kindness to grant me an audience.

As I was still musing about the tragedy of this venerable personality in these hard days of war, the door was opened suddenly and his spare figure stood before me. It was a moment full of emotion, and perhaps I might not have recovered myself so quickly if the kind prelate had not met me with so much kindness.

After his Eminence had allowed me to kiss his ring, he asked me to sit down. I had now a good opportunity to notice how grief dwelt on his entirely spiritualised face, in its frame of white hair. But his extraordinary kindness in intercourse did not leave him for one moment.

In connection with the summons, which had been sent in the name of the archdiocese to *De Tijd,* and

had been proclaimed in all the churches of Antwerp in the morning, his Eminence insisted that it should be printed in its entirety, as very many priests had taken refuge in The Netherlands, whose help was pressingly wanted in the arch-diocese in many of the parishes.

And he went on to say that he desired especially, most fervently the return of the fled population.

"Really, in all sincerity," he said, "no danger need be feared. I should be very grateful if the newspapers in The Netherlands would draw attention to the following promises which the German authorities gave me, and authorised me to make in their name:—

"1. The young men need not fear that they will be taken to Germany in order to serve in the German army, or be compelled to do any work.

"2. Should the police regulations be infringed anywhere by some individuals, the authorities will find the guilty parties and punish them, without attributing the guilt to the entire population.

"3. The German and Belgian authorities will do everything in their power to prevent scarcity of food."

"Your Eminence may permit me to remark that the second clause especially is very important and much more comforting than a previous declaration of the Imperial Governor, that owing to occasional mistakes he cannot prevent the innocent population from having to suffer with those who are guilty. May I ask, has this favourable result been obtained by your personal intervention?"

"That is to say . . . yes. I have suggested these

measures and they have been consented to. I hope that they may induce all the refugees in The Netherlands to return at once. A press bureau in your country has circulated the report that I too had planned to fly. There was no truth in it at all. It was my duty not to leave my people, is not that so? The shepherd must stay with his sheep, the vicars must do the same, and those who went away must therefore come back."

"Your Eminence visited Malines last Tuesday, I have been told. I may perhaps ask how you found the condition of the cathedral and the town?"

The cardinal's face was overclouded suddenly, and quietly he answered:

"Pardon me, it is perhaps better not to say a word about that for the moment. We are living through difficult times."

I understood and respected the restraint of the Belgian primate, who went on then:

"Tuesday of next week I hope to be at Malines again, and on the 20th of this month the administrative service of the archdiocese will be reinstalled."

"Then you will stay again at the episcopal palace, your Eminence?"

"Yes, certainly. It will take time of course, but the damage done to the St. Rombout church and the palace is not irreparable; the church has suffered very much, the spire is less damaged."

"Much will be needed to repair what has been damaged in this unfortunate country."

"Yes, yes. An immense amount will be neces-

sary. We are about to form committees; but so much is needed. In England they are also forming committees, and I have received money already from England, Scotland, and Ireland, and The Netherlands. . . ."

For a moment he gave way to emotion. He hesitated for a few seconds, and I saw tears in his eyes. He then went on with a trembling voice:

"The Netherlands is a generous country. How grateful, how immensely grateful am I to the Netherland people for what they have done for poor refugees. I cannot sufficiently express my gratitude. I have received reports from priests who came back, and I am deeply moved by them. They told me how at Roosendaal the Netherland soldiers gave all their bread to the refugees, knowing well that for some time they themselves would not get any other. No! I can never be sufficiently grateful for such sacrifices. And Catholics and non-Catholics all joined in it. That is beautiful, very, very beautiful."

"Your Eminence, what The Netherlands did for the poor Belgians came from the heart of the people, and I know for certain that the Catholics will be eager to contribute to the rebuilding of the destroyed churches and houses."

"The Netherlands has done already so much, but if it would come to the assistance of our unfortunate people also in this way it would greatly gladden the archiepiscopal government, who will be only too happy to accept gifts in these difficult times; and perhaps the Right Reverend Netherland bishops may be willing to send the gifts for this pur-

pose to us. We might then distribute those gifts among the parishes in the country which have suffered most."

"Well, in any case, your Eminence, I promise to bring it to the knowledge of the Catholics in The Netherlands, and you may rely upon their readiness. But now I will not take more of your valuable time, which you give so zealously to the poor and the unfortunate. I thank you very much for having granted me this audience."

"It was in the interests of our suffering country, and we are those who ought to be grateful. May I insist once more that you ask our refugees to come back to Antwerp and don't omit to state the three favourable regulations. . . ."

His Eminence then got up, kindly offered me his hand, the ring on which I kissed, and escorted me to the door in the amiable, simple way of which I shall retain the memory for ever.

I can see now once more how little Germans care about the given word. They asked and obtained from Cardinal Mercier his co-operation to incite the population to return, but the cardinal, always anxious to safeguard his compatriots, made conditions to which they consented.

The first of them was that no young man should be taken to Germany, or compelled to work. Now how many lads are not already in Germany, how many have not been compelled, especially in both the Flanders, to do work for the Germans? And were not loyal people who refused to do it imprisoned? Yes! Did not these violators of law and right proclaim that all appeal to international agree-

ments would be useless? "We shall no longer punish a whole population for the deeds of individuals," they also promised Cardinal Mercier. But many communities have had fines and taxes imposed upon them in consequence of the offence of one individual.

And although they also promised to do everything in their power to prevent lack of food in Belgium, they have bled to death the unfortunate country by continuous impositions and taxes, and thrown many into poverty and misery.

Yes, in the most scandalous manner they have violated the promises which the Germans gave Cardinal Mercier. But what signifies a word if treaties are only "scraps of paper?"

CHAPTER XV

THE ILL-TREATMENT OF BRITISH WOUNDED

I RETURNED from Louvain by military train. This one had had a most adventurous journey before it reached Louvain. It had left Cambrai in North France three days before, always going slowly and making long stops, to spare the seriously wounded at least a little. I estimated that in my train over 2,000 wounded had been loaded in a long, dismal procession of wagons. Most of them had not had their bandages renewed for a fortnight, and were still wearing the first emergency dressing; all came from the neighbourhood of Arras.

A little to the north of this town many had been lying wounded in the trenches for over eight days, without being able to get their wounds bandaged. They had to admit the success of the French field artillery, which produced a most serious effect.

The Germans all agreed that their right wing lacked artillery. The German soldiers who fell there were all killed in their trenches by the falling bombs, there was not sufficient field artillery to answer this murderous fire efficiently, and they could not do anything with their rifles against the invisible

enemy. The artillery fire of the French was most serious from the 1st to the 4th of October, and during those days the German trenches must have been a real hell. On October 4th a general "sauve qui peut" began from the trenches.

But the shell-fire of the French overtook them then, as they were retreating, while many others were killed by bombs from French aeroplanes, which were in action in great numbers. The retreat had not stopped before the Germans arrived in Cambray, where the thousands of wounded could at last be put in long trains and sent to Aix-la-Chapelle. A great many bombs from aeroplanes also hit these trains and killed a great many; my own train was everywhere pierced by fragments of those bombs. Within the carriages it was unendurable; the wounded men and their malodorous bandages had occupied them such a long time that the atmosphere was simply insupportable. Happily there was a corridor, where I stood all the time, with the little girl, in the company of some German military men who were sent home, not on account of wounds, but because of internal complaints.

Very slowly the huge monster sauntered along, stopping and waiting everywhere to allow long trains with fresh troops to pass. These came straight from Germany, with the youngest levies and volunteers who had just finished their drill. These had decorated their trains all over with green boughs and outside painted all sorts of caricatures, from which especially King George had to suffer much. Then one read "To Paris, to England," and similar hopeful devices.

When their train approached ours they looked out of the windows, or opened the doors, and waved and greeted and shouted at the top of their voices.

But as soon as these "tender-foots" came alongside our train and were not met with the same impetuous enthusiasm as they displayed themselves, but, on the contrary, saw sick, discouraged, exhausted faces gazing at them distressedly, their boisterousness suddenly extinguished, and a nervous, terrified expression pursed up their mouths. And the trains were already at some distance from each other before the young soldiers remembered that they ought to shout and to wave to those who had already done so much for the Fatherland.

We arrived at Landen, a place between Tirlemont and Waremme, where we had a stop of forty minutes, in order to feed the wounded. Soup was served from large washing-tubs, and I and my small companion were also offered some of this soldiers' food. When I had finished my meal, and walked up and down the platform in order to stretch my legs, my attention was drawn to an uproar in front of one of the last wagons. I went there, and shall not forget what I saw as long as I live; I wish that I had never seen it.

Amongst some Frenchmen, three British soldiers, seriously wounded, were lying on some straw. They looked distressed, and I thought that their condition was critical. I was told that these men had not had any food for five days, and now there stood in front of the open wagon doors two to three hundred German soldiers, partly slightly wounded, who were well able to walk, partly German soldiers of the

Landen garrison, who had been told off for distributing the soup. These two to three hundred men raged and jeered at those three unfortunate, heavily wounded British soldiers, who had not eaten for five days, and lay groaning helplessly on some dirty straw in a cattle-truck. The steaming tubs with hot soup were shown them, and these Germans shouted at them: "You want to eat, swine, swine; you ought to be killed! Beat them to death!—beat them to death! Here, that's what you ought to get!"

As they spoke these last words they aimed their rifles at the unfortunate, bleeding, helpless, and hungry creatures. Others spat on their clothes and in their faces, and the enraged Germans foamed at the mouth.

With weak eyes, eyes telling of approaching death, one of them gazed at these cruel torturers, or looked hungrily at the steaming soup; the two others had turned their heads on one side and closed their eyes. But at last also the third turned off his head and closed his eyes, sighing and groaning. In the meantime the Germans went on threatening them, blurting out all sorts of filthy abuse, spitting or threatening them with their rifles, while others were laughing and enjoying the helplessness of those three.

I stood still, dumb, aghast, unable to utter a word. Then I went to a sergeant who was also looking on and laughing; and, trembling all over, I said:

"What is happening here is frightful; those men are also human beings, who had to do their duty as much as you!"

I couldn't say more, my voice stuck in my throat.

And what was his answer?

"What? Do their duty? No, they are swine—paid swine; they get money for their dirty work, the swine!"

I did not answer. I could not. Silently I looked a little longer at the beastly scene, only sorry that I was not a giant who, with one strong hand, might restrain the roughs, and refresh with the other the burning, feverish lips of the wretched men.

What distressed me most was that among those two to three hundred soldiers in front of that open cattle-truck was not one man who wanted to take the part of these unfortunate British; no, not one!

When I reported the occurrence in *De Tijd,* I was fully conscious of the frightful accusation implied by my information; but I am prepared to confirm with the most sacred oaths that nothing in this accusation is untrue or exaggerated.

I was not afraid of an inquiry, but asked for it as a matter of fact, by writing in my report:—

"And if the German authorities intend to institute a serious and impartial inquiry, then I give them the following particulars:

"It happened at Landen on Friday, October 9th, in the train with wounded which arrived there from Brussels at about noon, when food was being distributed."

The German authorities have indeed made inquiries about the matter; I shall deal with that in the next chapter.

What happened at Landen made a very deep impression upon me; it shocked me more than all the terrible things which I had seen during the war and all the dangers which I went through. When the train went on again, and the soldiers began to speak to me once more, I was unable to utter a word and sat there musing.

Before I witnessed this terrible event at Landen some Germans in the train had already told me that they simply killed the British whom they made prisoners. Others assured me that such a thing did not happen in their division, but one asserted that by his company alone already twenty-six had been killed. I did not believe them then, and thought that they were better than they made themselves out, but after having witnessed that scene at Landen . . . !

One hour before the arrival at Liège the engine of our train dashed into another, and got so badly damaged that all the water from our engine ran away. This caused a delay of another two hours, so that we did not arrive at Liège before dusk, and could not think of reaching The Netherlands that day.

I took the little Amsterdam girl to my niece in the convent of the Sisters of Mercy, and went to an hotel myself. A German newspaper, bought at a bookstall, gave in gigantic type the information that Antwerp might fall at any moment, and a recently posted bulletin brought the feared-for news. But the people of Liège could not, and would not believe it.

I had expected it and believed the reports, but it

hurt all the same. I had had intercourse with German soldiers almost exclusively; but that gave me a much better opportunity for observing their conduct, which roused in me a deep sympathy for the poor, oppressed Belgian people. That was why I was so sorry to hear of the fall of Antwerp, although I was not discouraged. Right would triumph, and the day come when the Belgian nation would shake off the foreign yoke of tyranny, and repair in peace and prosperity, under the sagacious rule of their king, what barbarians destroyed and pulled down.

The next day I got to The Netherlands with my small protégée, after a tiring walk from Herstal to Eysden, where we could take the train to Maastricht. Here the father of the little girl came to meet his daughter, and took her to Amsterdam, to her "Mummy," of whom she had been speaking during the whole journey with so much longing.

Only now did I hear what had happened to the village of Lanaeken after I had seen the German preparations in Tongres for action against the little Belgian army that was still about in the north-eastern part of the country. The greater part of Lanaeken had been destroyed by shelling, and of course a great many innocent victims had fallen in consequence.

By destroying the life and possessions of peaceful civilians the Germans—who always boast so much about their military honour—gave unconscious expression to their awe of the fearless heroes who still stood their ground to the north of Liège, whilst the Germans were still besieging Antwerp.

I have mentioned already that the German authorities had ordered a so-called inquiry about what happened at Landen. As the result of this inquiry the press of all neutral countries had the following two official communications wired to them:—

"*Berlin, November* 10*th.* (E. B.).—A correspondent of *De Tijd* in Amsterdam has told a number of details about the so-called bad treatment of British wounded at the station of Landen, according to which the British had been left without food or drink, had been spit in their faces, and our soldiers were alleged to have aimed their rifles at them. The German Government had instituted a thorough inquiry into this matter and publish the result: 'The entire allegation of the correspondent is untrue. None of the details is covered by the facts. The British have not been beaten nor pushed nor spit at, but on the contrary warm food was offered them, which was accepted by all except two. Store-inspector Huebner and the landwehr-soldier Krueger have testified to this."

"*Berlin, November* 10*th.* (W. B.) Official.—The *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* writes: 'The daily newspaper, *De Tijd,* issued at Amsterdam, published on October 16th a report from a war correspondent at Maastricht, in which he asserted that on October 9th a train in which more than two thousand wounded were transported, arrived at the station at Landen in Belgium between Tirlemont and Waremme. Here it was said that a stop had taken place of forty minutes in which to provide the wounded with food. Walking up and down the platform the reporter pretends to have seen two to three hundred German soldiers, slightly wounded men and

men of the garrison of Landen, furiously abuse three seriously wounded British, who were lying in one of the last carriages of the train. They showed mugs full of steaming soup to the hungry British, whom they left lying there miserable from starvation. They were also said to have aimed their rifles at them, laughing roughly, and to have spit on them.

" 'These allegations of the reporter of *De Tijd* caused the authorities to institute inquiries, and the following is now stated with regard to the alleged events:

" 'On October 9th no train with two thousand wounded arrived at the station of Landen, but only small transports whose number can be checked accurately by the lists of wounded. Rioting by two to three hundred soldiers near a carriage could not take place, as the station guard was instructed to keep free a path along the train. There is, moreover, always an officer of the station-guard present, when a train with wounded leaves. It is impossible that the soldiers could have aimed their rifles at the British, as the men who get their food in the dining-hall, as also the serving military personnel, are always unarmed. Other soldiers are not admitted to the station. The British have neither been beaten, nor stabbed, nor spit at; on the contrary plates full of hot soup have been offered them which were refused by two of them. This has been confirmed by the declarations of people who were present.' "

Of course I did not withhold my answer, pilloried the hardly serious inquiry of the Germans, and published immediately an extensive contradiction in *De Tijd*. I quote the following from it:—

"Only about a month after the publication of my story about what happened at Landen, the German Government and military authorities considered that the time had come to contradict it, after ordering an inquiry which in reality cannot be called an inquiry at all. From their communiqués it is clear that some soldiers were heard who probably were privy to the act, and in any case benefited by a denial of the villainy committed at Landen. That is to say, men who were counsel in their own cause, and who were believed the sooner because their declarations were desirable for the support of German credit. But it does not appear from these communiqués that the German authorities also examined the wounded who were present, nor the two Netherlanders who travelled by that train: the young Miss de Bruin, from Amsterdam, and the present writer, as also the civilian witnesses at Landen. In opposition to the evidence of Stores-inspector Huebner and the landwehr-soldier Krueger, of which evidence it has not been stated that they gave it on oath, I declare myself prepared and willing, if a complete and impartial inquiry be instituted, to declare upon oath either to a properly qualified committee in The Netherlands or in Germany, or to a thereto-appointed arbiter, the following:

" '1. On Friday, the ninth of October, at noon, I stopped at Landen about forty minutes after arriving from Louvain in a terribly long train of passenger carriages and goods vans, with approximately two thousand wounded. (This estimate may be wrong to the extent of a couple of hundred, but that does not matter.) During this time the wounded were fed.

" 'I saw how two to three hundred German soldiers, part of them slightly wounded, who were well

able to walk, partly soldiers of the Landen garrison, who crowded about the open doors of one of the last wagons, raging and jeering against three seriously wounded British soldiers, about whom their French fellow-passengers told me that they had had nothing to eat for five days. The wounded were called "swine," were spit at, and some rifles were aimed at them. When I told a sergeant that it was a disgusting scene, he answered: "These British swine, they get paid for their filthy work." He alluded to the pay which the British volunteers receive because they enlist as mercenaries, Britain having no compulsory general military service. Before I witnessed this awful thing at Landen, Germans in the train had already told me that they simply killed any British whom they made prisoners. Others said that such a thing did not happen in their division, but one man contended that by his company already twenty-six had been killed. I did not believe them, and thought that they were better than they pretended to be.

"'2. The soup had been offered to the British, but two refused to take it, says the German Government. Yes, it was offered these wretched people, but, as I have said already, the German soldiers kept the steaming soup before them, shouting at them: "You want to eat, you swine!—you swine! you ought to be killed! This is what you may have!" And as they said the latter they aimed their rifles at the unfortunate men, whilst others who were not armed lifted up their fists and threatened them, or spat at them.

"'In my report about the occurrence I had not even exposed in all its harshness the treatment dealt out to the French soldiers. For they too were not offered plates of soup, but only the mugs were filled,

forming part of their equipment. And there were many who put out these mugs as if supplicating to have them filled once more; as that was not done they constantly put the empty mug to their mouth to try and lick off any remaining drops that might have stuck to its side. Some Germans said: "Yes, the French may have something, for they are soldiers, but those three there, well, they are paid swine."

" '3. I published the facts and insisted upon an impartial inquiry, in order to prevent, if possible, that only guilty soldiers should be heard should a complaint about the occurrence be lodged with the highest military authority.

" 'Instead of facing such an impartial inquiry with an examination of all available witnesses and punishment of the guilty, the German government finds the courage only to call me, a month after the event, "a liar," and the whole story a fairy-tale!

" 'If the German government had come somewhat earlier with their contradiction, it might have been possible to cite another witness, for—I have not reported that at first—among those who were present there was a civilian, an inhabitant of Landen, who also looked with anger at the cruel scene, and expressed his indignation when he could no longer restrain himself. But then there was a general outcry of:

" ' "What is this civilian doing here?" The young man could not explain his presence satisfactorily, and a couple of soldiers got hold of him, and, in the literal sense of the word, threw him away. When he waited at a short distance a little longer, with an angry face, one of the soldiers ran at him, threatening him with his bayonet. I might have been able to find that young man at the time, but now, a month later, this will be much more difficult. There was

also another group of civilians packed as densely as herrings in a cattle-truck on another line; they must have seen the beastly occurrence as well.

" 'I might quote another small detail. Before the train arrived at Landen I had had a very pleasant chat in the corridor with a German soldier, who seemed tolerably humane and civilised, even in his talk. After the departure from Landen I again got into conversation with him, and did not fail to express my indignation; and then he gave me the following reply: "Oh well, one must think of the position of our soldiers, who have been for days in the trenches under the murderous fire of the enemy. Later on they will themselves repent for what has happened." Perhaps the German government may be able to discover who that soldier is, if I add that he went home for good because he was suffering from heart-disease.

" 'And then there is something else. The brakesman of the wagon in which I travelled was a man who had enlisted only a couple of weeks ago as a volunteer for the service on the railways, and, if I remember correctly, hailed from Hamburg. He belonged to a Trades Union which had already once made a trip to Amsterdam and Rotterdam, and was for instance able to tell me that Krasnapolsky at Amsterdam was a large hotel. I also spoke to that man about what had happened, because I thought I had noticed that he was more human, but he too gave me the cynical answer: "Oh well, the French may have something to eat, they fight also for their country, but not those British, they only fight because that is their profession."

" '4. With regard to the arms of the German soldiers, it is true that the wounded men had none with them, but I have distinctly stated that the crowd con-

sisted of soldiers who belonged to the lightly wounded and of soldiers belonging to the Landen garrison. These latter had been told off to guard the station and the platforms and maintain order. It is possible that they had also to prevent the wounded from moving about on the platforms, but in that case they did not stick to their task, because everybody was free to go where he liked, and I myself did the same. That these guards did not guard anything at all at the moment is proved by the fact that the above-mentioned civilian was able to come near the riot, although he had to pass a number of platforms. That the soldiers belonged to the Landen garrison and had to do sentry-go is proved by the fact that they had their bayonets on their rifles.

" 'Finally, the contention that no riot could have taken place because the soldiers were fed in the dining-hall is entirely incorrect. That dining-hall was nothing but a shed entirely open at the front, in which there were a few seats. There the slightly wounded soldiers were fed first, and when they had supplied those, food was taken to the seriously wounded, who had to stop in the train, as also to myself and my little companion. The slightly wounded and the soldiers of the guard walked off with the distributors of the soup along the train in order to have a chat with their comrades in it. In that way they also came to the British when the wagon-door had been opened. It will be evident that I observed closely and retained in my memory all that had happened there and in the neighbourhood.

" '5. My pertinent declarations are now opposed by the German official contradiction; but how weak is the argument! I have already pointed out that only comrades of the accused men have been heard,

but not the accuser, nor, as is evident, the victims, nor other witnesses. There is more: "Crowding of two to three hundred soldiers near a wagon cannot occur"—thus says the communiqué—"because the station-guard's duty is to keep free the path along the train." Does anyone understand the weakness of this contradiction? It is as if one should say: "It is impossible that anything has been stolen in a town because it is the duty of the police to guard it." "Moreover there is also always an officer of the station-guard present at the departure of a train of wounded," the communiqué proceeds. But again I ask: What does this prove? It is a fact that this officer, if he was present, did not prevent what happened. "It is impossible that the soldiers aimed their rifles at the British, because the men who get their food in the dining-hall, and those of the military who distribute it, are always unarmed; no other soldiers are admitted to the station." I see that the German government simply quote the military regulations, and from them determine the facts. They cannot realise that it might be possible for their regulations not to be obeyed always.

" '6. I am convinced that on the whole the treatment of the wounded was generous and exemplary. But it is also a fact that the terrible hatred of the Germans against the British, encouraged by their military authorities (one has to think of the proclamation of Prince Rupert of Bavaria) and their scandalous comic papers, which disgust even decent Germans, induce to extravagances such as I witnessed at Landen. Did not a German officer explain to an editor of the *Algemeen Handelsolad* (evening issue of October 18th): "The unwritten order is to make everywhere as many French and as few English pris-

oners as possible; we don't try to wound, but to kill the British.'' ''

I think that my answer left nothing to be desired for plainness, and Germany cannot have derived much pleasure from its official contradiction. Moreover, the editor of *De Tijd* had also made inquiries from the little girl whom I escorted from Louvain on the day of the occurrence at Landen, and although I admit at once that not too great a value can be attached to the evidence of a girl of nine, I insert here what the editor wrote about that interview:—

"Our editor has moreover interviewed young Miss Antoinette de Bruijn here, whom our correspondent brought from Louvain to Maastricht. In the presence of her mother she told how she had been in a train full of wounded, that there were armed soldiers on the platform, and that some wounded soldiers had been teased by offering them steaming soup which was not given to them. The father of this girl, Mr. de Bruijn, also assured us that when he met his daughter at Maastricht, our correspondent, Mr. Mokveld, was still very much under the impression of what he had witnessed."

My contradiction became known in Germany, and it was an eye-opener to a great many people there. The editor of *De Tijd* received many letters from that country, and printed some of them with the name of the writer added. From these it seems that even there it was acknowledged in some circles that the German inquiry had been extremely one-

sided, and that it would have been wiser to admit what had happened at Landen, and punish the culprits.

The only purpose of my publication was to convince everybody of this, and thereby prevent the repetition of such a scandalous scene.

CHAPTER XVI

ON THE YSER

FROM the pretty town of Sluys in the Netherland part of Flanders I made a good many trips to the Belgian coastal regions and the Yser, the little river that will always be named in history, because there came the end of the German advance, and there the Belgian army displayed all its power, fighting with the courage of lions in defence of the last bit of their native soil.

Yes, Sluys will always live in my memory. How well have been received the thousands of Belgians who went there for shelter and how much misery have I seen relieved by the effectual mutual help of the Belgians and that of the civil and military Netherland authorities. The burgomaster in particular seemed to be the right man in the right place, and it was chiefly due to his sagacity that everything went so regularly in that small town, which had to maintain the proportionately greatest number of refugees.

In Sluys I also got to know by friendly intercourse the character of the Belgians, so open, so straightforward, and so bright.

From this town I got the best connections with

the West of Belgium, and as a rule I always made my first visit to ancient and pretty Bruges, which was constantly strongly occupied by the Germans. In front of the well-known Halls two small guns had been mounted, threatening the market-square. The same was the case in front of the Palace of Justice, where the commander's office was established. The Government buildings in the market were entirely occupied by the naval staff of Admiral von Schroeder, and dozens of sailors were sitting in the offices, working at their typewriting machines.

Soldiers came from and went back to the Yser, which river I saw three times during the fierce fighting.

The first time when the Germans had only been there for about ten days, and huge masses were sent to the scene of battle, because they had decided to break through at any cost.

Along the coast the German line did not reach far beyond Mariakerke, where a big German flag on a high dune indicated their most advanced front. Thanks to the consent of a couple of officers I was allowed to push on to the front lines, and did this in spite of the danger from bursting shrapnel. The wounded had to walk back from there to Ostend, very often suffering the most trying pains, because, according to what they told me, the Red Cross Service was not able to help them all. They were very dissatisfied on account of the waste of human life by which the attacks were accompanied, and some made bitter remarks about the staff which seemed to be mad, constantly sending new troops into the murderous fire with such evident callousness.

I have been able to assist a good many of these unfortunate people by bandaging the wounds with the dressing they gave me, or getting some water for them from some house in the neighbourhood; and one, who had fallen down exhausted by pain, I carried into a house.

I had more trouble with a wretch who, being heavily wounded in both legs, lay on the top of a dune beyond Mariakerke. He was quite alone, and when he discovered me his eyes glistened, full of hope. He told me of his agonies, and beseeched me to take him to a house or an ambulance. However much I should have liked to do that, it was impossible in the circumstances in which I found myself. Nowhere, even in the farthest distance, was a house to be seen, and I tried to explain the position to him. But he turned a deaf ear to all my exhortations, and insisted that I should help him. It was a painful business, for I could not do the impossible. So I promised him, and took my oath that I should warn the first ambulance I met, and see to it that they came and fetched him.

I went away urging him to maintain his courage for the time being, but he had scarcely noticed that I was about to go, when his eyes began to gleam and to roll in his head; then he took his rifle, which was lying by his side, and I, seeing his intention, ran down the dune as quickly as possible, whilst I heard the well-known click-clack behind me; the man had fired two bullets at me. . . .

I must not take that sort of thing amiss. Who knew with how much pain and how long he had been lying there, facing death, but fearing it too.

At last someone came near, and he put all his hope in that man, but a hope that vanished. Yes, I can quite understand that a man in those conditions goes mad.

I was not able to stay long at Mariakerke, but succeeded, by going in an easterly direction, to get near Leke, where the fight was also in full swing, and where evidently the same command had been issued: "Advance at any cost." The German artillery stood south of Leke, but I succeeded in pushing on to a hill near the road, where I could see the columns of smoke of the Belgian artillery and the clouds of dust which the German shrapnel threw up.

The Germans advanced in a formation which I had never seen yet. The men went at the double-quick in closed ranks three abreast, each of the threefold files marching at a small distance from the other.

They stormed the Belgian lines with lowered bayonets. The Belgians quietly allowed them to come near, but as soon as they were at a certain distance from the trenches they wished to take, I heard the rattle of the mitrailleuses, and the thunder of the guns. The storming soldiers then disappeared in a fog of smoke and dust, in which I saw their shadows fall and stagger. This went on for about ten minutes, and then they came back in complete disorder, still followed by the hostile bullets and shrapnel.

A period of calm followed, but not for long, for again and again new attacks were made.

I myself was not very safe either, for frequently

bursting shells fell near me. I therefore thought it safer to cross to a farm-house a hundred yards farther on, where I might find shelter. Before I got there an officer of a passing division took me violently by the arm and asked who I was and what I was doing there? His eyes glittered savagely, and he as well as his men seemed to be fearfully excited.

I said in a few words who I was, and showed one of my German permits. He had scarcely seen the many German stamps on it when he let me go and went on with his men. I then pinned on my coat two permits which had the greatest number of stamps, and in consequence had no further trouble.

From the garret-window of the farm-house I followed the fierce battle for another half-hour, and saw that the Germans suffered enormous losses, but achieved no gains. At last I had to leave this place too, because shells fell again quite near to the house. I stayed another ten minutes near an ambulance, where they were quite unable to attend to the numerous wounded men. Most of them got an emergency dressing, and were advised to go higher up and try to get better attention there.

The battle I saw that day on the Yser was the beginning of the trench-war in that district. Many Belgian troops had dug themselves in, and later on this system was extended, in consequence of which the Belgian line there became impregnable.

In those days German Headquarters gave continuously the thoughtless order: "To Calais, to

Calais," and the Staff considered no difficulties, calculated no sacrifices, in order to achieve success.

What these frenzied orders have cost in human lives History will tell later on.

. . . . .

As soon as the Germans were near the coast they began to fortify it most formidably, in order to prevent eventual attempts at landing by hostile troops. Guns were soon mounted in the dunes, as I noticed during a trip which I made along the coast on Sunday, October 25th.

Heyst was occupied by a small division of marines, although a few days before the garrison had been larger, but on Saturday evening all soldiers along the coast had been alarmed, and most of them were ordered to proceed to the battle-field near Nieuwpoort, where matters were at the time less favourable for the Germans. Near the dyke I found five pieces of ordnance mounted, their mouths turned towards the sea, and that they were quite right in taking precautions was proved by the men-of-war riding on the distant horizon, without motion.

In the centre of the town I was detained by three sailors, who called out an angry "Halt!" seized my bicycle, and made me a prisoner, "because I was an Englishman." Happily I could prove the contrary by my papers; and the permit of the Bruges commander to go about on a bicycle made them return it.

There was a general complaint in that district about the very arbitrary requisitions: for example, beds and blankets were extensively taken away from the convents, a thing against which the burgomaster

of Bruges had already protested. Horses, cows, and other cattle were simply taken from the stables and the meadows, and paid for with paper promises.

At Zeebrugge the conditions were not alarming. The houses of those who had gone away, however, had been damaged most terribly, and looted. Round the harbour guns were mounted, guarded by many sentries. I was at first forbidden to cross the canal bridge, but my excellent credentials at length made the sentries give in. Everything indicated that already during the first days of the occupation the Germans had begun to execute their plan to turn Zeebrugge into a station for submarines.

The commander ruled with a strong hand. They issued not only the usual proclamations about introducing German time, but the commander went even so far as to dictate at what hour the Holy Masses had to be said. In one of the proclamations I read, for example, that in future the Mass of six o'clock, Belgian time, had to be said at the same hour German time. Another proclamation said that skippers were forbidden to sail, and that all boats, including fisher-boats, had been seized.

In the dunes near Ostend I came across a level field fenced off by the military, and in the centre I saw a large company of superior officers, and a marine band. They were arranged round three big caves, into which just then had been lowered nine military officers and ordinary soldiers, who died in the nearly completed new Military Hospital of Ostend in the neighbourhood.

With a powerful voice, in order to drown the roar of the guns, a German parson delivered the

funeral oration, in which he spoke of the heroic conduct of the fallen men, who had sacrificed their lives for God, Kaiser, and Fatherland, and who, by God's inscrutable decree, were not destined to witness the final victory of the powerful German armies. The marines put their instruments to their mouths and played a slow funeral march. It was really very touching, and all the spectators came under the impression.

Whilst yet the sweet strains of the music sounded over the dunes, the dull booming of the heavy field-artillery was heard constantly, and each boom meant the end of so many more human lives. The music went on, and the officers approached one after the other to throw a handful of sand on the corpses of their fallen comrades. I saw their nostrils tremble, saw them bite their lips nervously, saw tears in their eyes.

The ceremony wound up with a short silent prayer offered at the request of the parson.

The funeral had deeply moved me, and full of emotion I approached the edge of the graves. I saw three corpses in each of them, simply wrapped in a clean, white sheet. The only decorations were some green palm branches . . . the branches telling of peace.

A little farther on I discovered a good many other mounds. A cross made of two little pieces of wood stood on each, amongst pots with flowers and small posies. On one of the crosses I saw written in pencil—

"Captain Count Von Schwerin, 19,10.'14."

It was very interesting, because a humble private had been buried by his side.

Of course I did not know this Count von Schwerin, but because I had just witnessed that funeral, and because it was so striking that men of every class were buried in the same manner, I reported what I saw to my paper. And, tragic fate, in consequence of this, the wife of the late Count heard for the first time of the death of her husband to whom she, a Netherland baroness, had been married at the beginning of the war. At the request of the family I made arrangements so that the grave might be recognised after the war.

In Ostend every place was full of wounded men, who all came walking from the battle-field in groups. Even in those days the fierce fights continued in consequence of the mad attempts to conquer Dunkirk and Calais. Great losses were suffered also by the enormous effect of the British naval guns, against which the German marines had mounted big guns in Ostend and farther along the coast, in order to keep the fleet at a distance.

On the day of my visit to Ostend all sorts of conveyances had taken more than 3,000 wounded into the town. Peasants from the neighbourhood were compelled to harness their horses and transport the unfortunate men. Such a procession was distressing to look at, as most men lay on open carts, only supported by a handful of newly cut straw, and long processions entered the town continuously. As reinforcements had arrived, the divisions of the German army which had suffered most came sometimes

from the front to the town, in order to have a rest, and then I saw a great deal of misery.

Some of the soldiers were furious and others distressed on account of the great number of comrades left on the battle-field, while they hardly made any progress against the tenacity of the Allies. Those who were not seriously wounded were not even put up in hospitals or similar buildings, as there was only room for a few, although many private houses had been turned into supplementary hospitals. In the streets and the cafés I saw therefore hundreds of men in bandages.

The condition of the civilian population was not too roseate. Most of them were away, and from those who had stayed everything was requisitioned. Staying in the town was not without danger, for two days before my visit it had been bombarded from noon to one o'clock by the British fleet, by which an hotel on the boulevard and some houses in the Rue des Flamands had been damaged.

From Ostend I went a few days later to Thourout, a townlet to the north of the centre of the Yser-line. I was accompanied by two Netherland colleagues whom I had met at Bruges. Everything was quiet there; the commander of the naval region, Admiral von Schroeder, had made himself slightly ridiculous, by informing the population in a proclamation that he had ordered the British citizens in the coastal region to leave the country, in order to protect them from their fellow-countrymen of the British fleet, who, by bombarding Ostend, had endangered their lives.

As we left through the Gate-of-Bruges towards

Thourout we were approached by a small military group, a few German soldiers who escorted about a dozen French and Belgian prisoners of war. Until that moment the street had been relatively quiet, but the inhabitants had scarcely heard that the "boys" came, when each ran into the street, forgetting all fear of the "Duuts," and, breaking through the escort, they gave their "boys" an apple, or a pear, or a packet of cigarettes; so we saw a huge round of white bread fly through the air and land in the hands of one of the "boys." Such a thing touches one always, and even the escorting Germans, who at first were very indignant on account of the sudden and unexpected intrusion, left the citizens alone with a generous gesture, as to say: "Well, have your way."

The other eleven miles of the road to Thourout were quite deserted, and only in one place did I see a man working in the field. We only saw now and again a small escort which overtook us. From afar a trooper approached us; after having heard who we were, he told us that he had been on the way already three days and three nights from the trench lines, and how fierce the fighting was there. The German losses had been immense; he pointed to the unoccupied horse by his side, and said: "My chum, whose horse this was, fell also." He took a couple of strong pulls at his pipe, and, spurring his mount, rode off with a: "Keep well."

At Thourout all convents and large buildings had been turned into hospitals, and the streets on both sides were full of big wagons. Hundreds of soldiers went off, and large convoys of carts were standing

in the meadows and on the roads, where officers and men were also practising riding. We were here in the rear, where there was a continuous going and coming from the front. Most soldiers were in a more or less excited mood; some did not hide their discontent, or sat musing dejectedly, asking themselves how these terrible days would end for them? Others again seemed to have got into a sort of frenzy in consequence of the continuous fighting and were not able to think logically at all. They told excited stories about the British whom they had killed, and chased away from the 42 c.m. guns, who, according to them, were also at work in the swampy soil near Nieuwpoort, and also told about the shooting civilians, and those cursed Belgians, who cut open the bellies of their poor wounded, or sliced off their noses, hands, and ears. Of course pure fairy tales, but recited with much power of conviction.

The question of lodgings brought also many difficulties, for nobody wanted to, or could put us up. At last we succeeded at the Hôtel l'Union, where we first ate two roasted pigeons which were intended for a couple of officers, who would return in the evening from the front line. The three of us subsequently occupied one room, after having written on the door with chalk that Lieutenants So and So were staying there. For the landlady had told us that she was willing to put us up, but that the officers who returned every night from the front line were sure to turn us out. Indeed in the evening we heard heavy steps before our door, but after a voice had read out that Lieutenants So and

So were passing the night there, they all went away again.

The next morning the roar of the cannon woke us up, and soon we heard how the fighting stood, for when we went to the commander for a permit to go to Dixmuiden, the sympathetic major absolutely refused it, and haltingly added that he himself did not yet know how things stood there. Well, that was enough for us. At last he gave us a permit for Ostend, and we noticed very soon that now we were in the rear of the front. Whilst the guns were thundering on continuously and the shrapnel exploded in the air, we passed continuously large contingents, who actually formed one long line. The fight was going on only a few miles away, and incessantly the unhappy wounded came out of the small bypaths, stumbling on in their heavily muddied clothes.

At the "Oud Slot van Vlaanderen," a large, ancient castle, there was a lot of hustle and bustle of carriages and motor-cars. We had not gone another two hundred yards, when someone came after us and stopped us as suspects. We were escorted back to the castle, where a general command was established, and an aviators-division, with the motor-section attached to it. Happily our detention did not last long, and after examination we were released. On the road was an infernal noise, as the violent roar of the cannon was mixing with the roar of the wheels of the heavily-loaded convoys and the whirr and hooting of the army motors. Long processions of field-kitchens passed us also, most of them brand-new; but it was remarkable that all carts arranged

for a team of two were drawn with great difficulty by only one horse, and also that so many civilians have been compelled to act as drivers, or to gather the wounded.

Constantly new and large transports of wounded came along the road, and here and there they were busy killing and burying wounded horses. The inhabitants locked themselves in their houses, and expected with great fear that any moment the military might arrive to claim their last horse or cow. The requisitions went on continuously, and the cattle were driven to the front in a long, desolate procession.

As we went on towards Eerneghem French aviators were heroically reconnoitring above the German lines. One came from Dixmuiden and one from Nieuwpoort; both went to about half-way between these two towns, where the centre of the battle was. The Germans kept up an unbroken artillery fire at those birds in the air. I saw quite near to them shells exploding right and left and discharging dense, black clouds of smoke that disappeared slowly. There were moments when these black stretches of cloud seemed to form a frame round the aeroplanes, but the brave aviators knew how to escape from their assailants by all sorts of tricks. They came down to go up again unexpectedly, entirely changed their direction a moment later, and at last both disappeared undamaged.

At Eerneghem we were not only stopped, but also sent back outright. It was considered extremely impudent on our side that we had dared to push on so far, because we were in the fighting-line. Even

the permit given by the commander of Thourout was of no avail.

Back at Bruges we attended in the market the concert given by a German military band near the statues of Breydel and de Koninck. At the commander's office I witnessed a remarkable incident. A German post-official and a soldier had just brought in a decently dressed gentleman. The postman began to relate that he was taking away the telephone instrument at that gentleman's house in order to fix it up at the commander's office, and that the gentleman had said: "Why do you steal that instrument?" as the postman said this the commander jumped up in a fury, and called out:

"What? What? Do you dare to call it stealing, what we Germans take here in Bruges?"

"Sir, I do not understand German, but——"

"Not a word, not a word; you have insulted a German official, and according to the proclamation you know that that is severely punished. You are my prisoner."

As he said this the commander put his hand roughly on the shoulder of the trembling man, who again said in French:

"I have not used the word 'steal' at all, but let me explain the matter."

"There is nothing to explain. Officer, you can take your oath on it?"

"Certainly, captain."

"Well"—this to a private—"you call the patrol; this man must be arrested."

The unhappy man bowed his head trembling, and

with dull resignation he left the office, strongly escorted.

The man who had this experience was Mr. Coppieters, the District Commissioner, a man who had given all his life to the service of society and the good of the community.

Happily the burgomaster intervened, and, as I heard later, got him released.

These are some of the things I could tell about my trips in the West of Belgium. By the end of November I was no longer allowed to move freely behind the front, although from time to time I visited small Belgian frontier-places.

Yet I am glad to have witnessed the terrible fights near the Yser a couple of times where the German invasion was stopped, and where we may hope that soon victory may dawn on the brave Belgian army.