



THE  
TRIANGLE OF TERROR  
IN BELGIUM

MAJOR-GEN.  
SIR GEORGE ASTON, K.C.B.







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THE TRIANGLE OF TERROR







For the President  
of the United States  
Personally



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Gr. Majestät des Kaisers und Königs.

Belgian neutrality which had to be violated by  
Germany on strategic grounds,

William II

FACSIMILE EXTRACT  
FROM  
MESSAGE WRITTEN BY THE KAISER  
TO PRESIDENT WILSON  
ON AUG. 10TH 1914

# THE TRIANGLE OF TERROR IN BELGIUM

BY

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR GEORGE ASTON, K.C.B.

IN COMMAND OF BRITISH FORCE OCCUPYING OSTEND IN AUGUST 1914,  
FORMERLY BRIGADIER-GENERAL ON THE GENERAL STAFF,  
AUTHOR OF "LETTERS ON AMPHIBIOUS WARS,"  
"SEA, LAND, AND AIR STRATEGY," ETC.

*Late Royal Marine Artillery.*

"Belgian neutrality, which had to be violated by  
Germany on strategical grounds."

THE KAISER, 10th September 1914.

"What is permissible includes every means of war without  
which the object of the war cannot be obtained."

*German War Book.*

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W. I.

1918

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TO  
THE BELGIAN NATION  
AND  
TO THEIR KING



## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE horrors perpetrated in Belgium by the German army in August and September 1914 have been fully described in several books. Eye-witnesses of the occurrences have published a mass of evidence, and they have reserved much more for publication when the German reign of terror over the country has been relaxed. They have not yet disclosed all they know, for fear of the terrible consequences that such disclosure would bring upon people who are still in the hands of the enemy, but whose evidence is in the custody of others. Some day all the facts will come out. Truth cannot be suppressed indefinitely.

The object in this book is to show the deliberate strategic purpose underlying the policy of cruelty, arson, murder, and torture of the innocent, rather than again to describe

individual incidents which resulted from that purpose.

Having seen something of modern warfare, and read a good deal about past wars, I thought at first that there must have been exaggeration in the original verbal and newspaper accounts which had reached me, because I realised the tendency of individual members of panic-stricken crowds to exaggerate, and even to invent atrocities. I remembered also the slanderous campaign of falsehood conducted in the Continental—especially the German—press against our troops in the South African War. I knew personally that the statements made then were pure inventions, probably by criminals capable themselves of putting in practice the bestial horrors which their evil brains conceived.

The collective evidence of the Bryce Commission Report, the German War Book, the Kaiser's message of August 10th 1914 to President Wilson, the numerous privately published accounts by neutral eye-witnesses, and reports received verbally from credible



authorities, left no option but to believe that the horrors in Belgium actually occurred. Even then it was difficult to realise how those in power could have used disciplined forces as the instruments of so despicable a policy. I was in command at the time of one of the best disciplined corps in the world, and I believe, and hope, that it would not have been possible by any means to employ them in the deliberate slaughter or torture of helpless men, women, and children. I was much puzzled to think how German troops, celebrated for their discipline, could have been worked up to perpetrate the cruelties that have been proved against them. I think I have now found the solution. Cruelty, as usual, was the child of fear. Their fears were wrought upon, by the officers deputed to carry out the policy, by tales of imaginary *francs-tireurs* in every town and every village. Drunken orgies on looted wine completed the process of turning disciplined men into super-beasts. This view is expressed by a neutral eye-witness, M. Mokveld, Dutch Correspondent

of the *Tijd*, in a book describing his experiences in Belgium.

In conclusion, I must offer my thanks to the German Supreme Court for expressing my object in writing this book better than I can myself. After trying a German subject for repeating what German soldiers had told him of the atrocities practised by the German army, the Court stated "reports which make the German conduct of war appear horrible and inhuman arouse indignation and disgust in Germany and abroad, and thereby weaken the German power of resistance, and strengthen the power of resistance of our enemies, and may add new enemies to them." If this object is attained, the labour of compilation will be well repaid. I am indebted to the *Times* of 30th August for this quotation.

G. G. A.

WOODFORD,  
SALISBURY,  
*January 1918.*

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# THE TRIANGLE OF TERROR

## CHAPTER I

August 1914 — The Kaiser's "Strategical Grounds"—The Triangle — Truth — A Soldier's Deductions — The Kaiser's Power—1870 to 1914—The Prussian Plan and its Execution—State Morality and Strategy—Military Effectiveness.

"BELGIAN neutrality, which had to be violated by Germany on strategical grounds."

These words were written by the Kaiser to President Wilson on August 10th 1914, and they give us the key to the great problem now confronting all Governments and peoples in the world. A few days before, he had broken his plighted word by authorising the invasion of Belgium, and had shaken for all time the faith of civilised nations in treaties and International Agreements. The War-plans were drawn up by the great General Staff, whose business it was to see that the most effective use, from the military point of view, was made of the

forces of destruction under their control. Violence and Cunning were exalted in the German War Book as the ideal methods of conducting a German War, and every means were classed as permissible if the object of the War could not otherwise be obtained. Cruelty and ruthlessness were encouraged, as tending to shorten warlike operations, and make them more effective. Pity and sympathy with human pain and misery were feelings unworthy of German warriors; all such sentiments must be discouraged "on strategical grounds," and for the Kaiser's "strategical grounds" to be satisfied Time was the most important of all factors. Belgium is a country with good roads and a splendid railway system. No mountains or physical features can cause loss of time in the movements of armies, and delays can result only from human causes—at that time from the Belgian Field Army and the garrisons of the forts of Liège and Namur, which lay in the route of the German advance. The vast masses of troops which the Germans could use for the great turning movement against France amply sufficed to overcome the small, ill-equipped Belgian army, and huge mobile howitzers could raze



the forts to the ground; but these measures might take too long, and the strategical plan took no account of delays, even of minutes. The pace must be accelerated at all costs; the path of the armies must be rolled flat, no matter if the great pitiless rollers crushed the bodies of a whole free people into the soil, leaving a trail of innocent blood to dye the great flat road in their wake.

The German armies destined for the great turning movement crossed the Belgian frontier from about the line Aix-la-Chapelle—Malmédy. Near Liége the great tramping columns of troops divided, some to follow up the valley of the Meuse and cross higher up the river, some to move by Louvain and Brussels. The village of Malines lies to the northward of this route and close to the outer forts of Antwerp, behind which the bulk of the Belgian Field Army retired, after offering a gallant resistance. The vital importance for the great movement of the roads and railways lying within or about the triangle—Malines, Charleroi, Liége—is now apparent. This triangle, from the treatment by the Germans of the population, became the Triangle of Terror, about which this book is written. The policy of cruel

and inhuman torture of a defenceless civilian population was cruelly and deliberately adopted "on strategical grounds."

The sufferings of Belgium have been described in many books. "Of the writing of books there is no end," wrote Solomon, and centuries after came that desperate cry from Pontius Pilate, "What is Truth?"—not a jest, as Bacon wrote, but an appeal from the depth of the heart of a man pressed to come to the most momentous decision in the records of the human race. Again, in this great world crisis, there is an earnest searching for the truth. It is sought for in official books of all colours of the rainbow, which claim to disclose at least some of the hidden mysteries of secret diplomacy, and those engaged in such researches may wish to know the deductions that any soldier would draw from the way in which the German army was employed in the late Summer of 1914. To some minds it may be that their deeds are too terrible for belief, including as they do so much fiendish cruelty to the innocent and defenceless: for this reason it is necessary to show the military purpose underlying and explaining the policy. The moral responsibility falls upon

the Kaiser. He alone was in a position to control those in Prussia who conduct and prepare for war, the favourite industry of his race.

We must go back a few years to make this narrative intelligible. After the crushing attack made upon them by the Prussians in 1870-1, the French fortified very strongly all direct approaches to their country from German territory, but the line of fortresses was not continued northward to the coast, along the Belgian frontier. The neutrality of Belgium had been guaranteed by all the great European Powers, and in 1870 the great belligerents did not sacrifice their national honour by crossing Belgian territory in order to gain a military advantage. But apart from morality, international obligation, and honour, it was clear to all soldiers that, if the German army was as strong and efficient as it was supposed to be, the most effective action it could take in a war against France would be to outflank the left of the French line of fortresses by pouring as many troops as possible through Belgium. The Prussians were generally credited with something very near perfection in their arrangements for saving every moment in

equipping, concentrating, and setting in motion their vast armies, and the only doubt in the minds of the soldiers of other countries centred in the question whether moral obligations would in any way influence their plans for launching them into France.

Statesmen who trusted in the sanctity of the written word, party men whose expressions of opinion were dominated by the prospect of popularity in their constituencies, and those of the public who thought at all in the matter, were apparently unable to believe that in these days a great people could throw over all moral obligations and take action purely on the plea of military effectiveness. Many soldiers held the same view up to a certain date. They changed their opinions about eleven or twelve years ago, for two reasons. Arrangements were obviously being made in Germany to pour troops through Belgium, and with one voice publicists, preachers, and teachers were promulgating the doctrine of blind obedience to a State that should obey no moral law, be responsible to no higher authority, and act purely from self-interest in its dealings with other States.

The Belgian Government was alarmed,

and in 1911 their Minister at Berlin asked for an assurance that Belgian neutrality would be respected. The Chancellor of the German Empire gave in reply an assurance that Germany had no intention of violating Belgian neutrality. Two years afterwards, the German Secretary of State declared in the Reichstag that "Belgian neutrality is provided for by International Conventions, and Germany is determined to respect those Conventions." On July 31st 1914, the German Minister in Brussels told the Belgian Department of Foreign Affairs that he knew of the assurances given by the German Chancellor in 1911, and that he "was certain that the sentiments expressed at that time had not changed."

On August 2nd 1914 the same Minister demanded a passage for the German army through Belgium, with instant declaration of war as the alternative. Early on the 4th the German troops crossed the frontier.

The plan was conceived by the great General Staff at Berlin. The Imperial Chancellor had sufficient strength of soul to brand their action publicly as a wrong before the whole world, but justified it on the grounds of necessity and "military aims"

—a vague term, on which a flood of light was thrown by the Kaiser a week later, when he used the expression “strategical grounds” in his message, written on a telegraph form,<sup>1</sup> to President Wilson, and we now come to the interpretation of this and some subsequent crimes, which the majority of the world’s population have determined shall not be repeated by the Central European or by any other nations.

The word “strategy” is more easily understood than defined, as applied to land forces. The art of moving armies in the theatre of war, so as to bring about successful battles will serve our purpose as a definition, and the Kaiser and his Chancellor both meant that the crime of invading Belgium, and of previously lying about their intentions, was done in order to manœuvre an overwhelming force round the left flank of the French army, having first tried to conceal their plans in order to make the blow more effective. If a surprise could be ensured, the French would not have time to prepare, the Belgians could not make adequate preparations to defend their country, and the other Powers would be

<sup>1</sup> See Frontispiece.

unable to give them effective aid. A Government adhering to the doctrine that the State obeys no moral law, and acts purely from self-interest, would have no hesitation, firstly, in soiling their honour by breaking a solemn obligation; and secondly, in lying deliberately to put other States off their guard, if thereby they could increase the prospect of victory over victims of their policy.

In our search for the truth, we must adhere to historical facts, accepted by all, and the deductions to be drawn from those facts from the point of view of military effectiveness. We have reached the date when the neutrality of Belgium was violated by the German armies. In the next chapter we shall see how "strategical grounds" were subsequently interpreted by the agents of a State unrestrained by honour or moral obligations.

## CHAPTER II

The Triangle of Terror — Prussian Staff Plans — The Appendix of Holland—The Kaiser's Sanction—Working out the Plan—Launching the Armies—Strategical Necessity.

ON the enclosed map, the triangle formed by joining Malines, Charleroi, and Liège will be noticed. Two sides of the triangle are formed by the lines Malines—Liège, and Charleroi—Liège. It is from that blood-soaked triangle that the name of this book has been derived. The area represents towns and villages in which were perpetrated deeds of horror against the innocent and defenceless, of both sexes and of all ages, in the months of August and September 1914.

Let us study the map for a moment and try to realise the plans of the great General Staff, in order to understand better the Kaiser's "strategical grounds." There are many ways of studying maps, and, objectionable as it may be, we will first treat this one



simply as a diagram, without remembering that it really represents smiling countrysides, with ripening harvests, country villages, hamlets thickly dotted about to accommodate workers in intensive cultivation, towns, and busy hives of industry, all rich in art treasures and beautiful monuments of the faith of nations. Forget for the present the dense population following their peaceful pursuits, and harbouring no designs against neighbouring States. Think only of the map as a chess-board, in which the game of war is to be played, and, with the German Staff, think of the strategical necessity of moving the pieces—the armies—in the most effective way to win the game.

We know what the pieces are made of, and how to move them, and we know that the faster they move the more effective their movements will be. Both sides can move, and the one that moves first can generally force the other to conform to his plan. The object, as the whole world knows, was to strike a hammer-blow swiftly in France, to murder the French as a nation—to strike them down with such terrific force as to leave them incapable of further intervention when the great military machine was other-

wise employed. That the French were peaceful neighbours, harbouring no schemes of aggression, was beside the point—it was a strategical necessity to make sure that they should not obstruct the German schemes of conquest. Between the French nation and their fate stood the gallant French army, as the only shield, and the problem was how to smash it most rapidly, and most completely. If an army is struck in front it can retire, constantly offering resistance, and annihilation is a slow process. If struck in flank it may be rolled up and hurled back as a confused mob, no longer capable of undertaking field operations. The French had skilfully designed a line of fortresses, which would have enabled their army to offer prolonged resistance against a direct frontal attack from German territory. They could not extend the line all the way to their northern coast without courting disaster by being weak everywhere. A direct attack from German into French territory would not turn the flank of the French army, but one through Belgium would, if it could be made quickly enough. Therefore, the great General Staff argued, a rapid movement of masses through

Belgium was a strategical necessity, which must override all considerations of honour and international obligations. And the Kaiser sanctioned their plan.

Now let us go back to the map, still using it only as a diagram for the present. Let us notice first the Appendix of Holland, in the north-east corner, running down to Maastricht. It would be convenient to move the armies and their impedimenta across this strip of Dutch territory on to the line (say) Brussels—Charleroi, and then swing them round to the south-west to strike the heavy blow against the French flank, but it was not quite a strategical necessity to violate Dutch neutrality. We need not go into the objections in detail—a large book could be written on that question, both from the sea and from the land point of view. The strategical advantage of saving so many hours in the march had to be balanced against certain naval and economic disadvantages, and possible attacks from Dutch territory on the lines of communication of the great armies. It is enough to note that the great General Staff decided against it, and we may be sure that no considerations besides

those of expediency held any weight with them. Let us look now at Aix-la-Chapelle, and Malmédy, in German territory—it is to the armies advancing westward from that line that we must pay special attention. Further to the southward, we can imagine further masses of troops extending all the way to the Swiss frontier, and ready to move westward in the Great Staff plan.

The Kaiser having agreed to rule out moral obligations, the Staff had worked out the plan, using their great calculating machine. The mobilisers, the railway department, the road-making department, the water-transport department, had all been put in gear, and carried on their business of working out, to a fraction of a minute, how time could be saved in hurling on to this line Aix-la-Chapelle—Malmédy immense armies, men, horses, guns, transport, ambulances, aircraft, and all the accessories in use in modern war. The Field Army Staff then took them over, organised them in order of march, and worked out, to an hour, the time-table for the forward marches. To use only one road would, of course, be madness: with such a great army weeks would then elapse before the last

troops could move forward. As many roads as possible must be used. The Meuse and other rivers to be crossed were noted, and plenty of extra pontoon bridges were ready near the heads of the columns. Also the Liége forts, and the heaviest siege-train ever known was made by Krupp, in case the Belgian garrison should stand fast there. Arrangements were made to borrow very heavy mobile howitzers from the Austrians. There must be no time lost. The masses must smash through swiftly to the line Brussels—Charleroi, or they would be late for the great swing round to the southwest, to strike the French army in flank. The Appendix of Holland cramped the movement; the narrow space between Liége and the frontier was like the neck of a bottle for the great armies that must later open out in parallel columns on a wider front, using all the roads they could find. The Staff and detailed work to get the great armies through this neck was tremendous: the whole plan took years of calculation and adjustment. Constant checking showed how a few minutes can be saved here and there, and it was worth while to do a month's office work to save a few hours in

the actual movement. When the whole machinery was started it was a "military necessity" to brook no delay at any point: such delays might disarrange and confuse the whole plan.

Now we can give up thinking of maps as diagrams, and look upon ours as representing a fair countryside, over which is bursting a stream of armies, launched by a human calculating machine that acknowledged allegiance to no moral laws, either of man or of the Almighty. The great General Staff had seen to it that every unit in those armies was trained and equipped for the work before them. Every one concerned knew the object of the War, the great plan, and the need for rapid movement. A War Book, issued to all, taught them how to conduct war; it contains the words: "What is permissible includes every means of war without which the object of the war cannot be obtained." Special incendiary soldiers, some of whom are reported to have worn broad belts with the words "God with us!" were equipped with hatchets, syringes, shovels, incendiary pastilles, and revolvers, and armies so provided crossed the frontier between Aix-la-Chapelle and Malmédy on 4th of August,

knowing that the Belgian nation had held staunchly to their obligations, and that such resistance as their small, unprepared army could offer would probably be encountered.

The great Machine was started, and the hands of the clock were moving. In order to be up to time, it was a necessity to use every means, "without which the object of the war could not be obtained," to smash through, and "Necessity knows no law."

Before the Triangle of Terror was reached, it was necessary for the hurrying columns to cross the small strip of territory between the frontier and the forts of Liége. We will follow their movements, and try to realise what the Kaiser's "strategical grounds" meant to the peaceful civilian population dwelling there, within reach of the great lines of advance.

## CHAPTER III

The Attitude of Belgium—The German Invasion—  
the Frontier to Liège—In Liège itself.

THIS book is written in the fourth year of the Great War. Living as we do in the memory of three years of horrors, inflicted upon the innocent and defenceless in the name of Prussian military necessity, it is difficult for us to recall what the peaceful world was like in the Summer of 1914. Let us try to do so when we think of what the Belgians were faced with on the 4th of August 1914. The German Government had assured them, through the Minister at Brussels on July 31st, that their neutrality would be respected, but during the preceding years soldiers, who had studied the German preparations, must have warned them of their impending fate. The Ultimatum presented by the German Minister at 7 P.M. on 2nd August, proved that the soldiers were right.



The Belgians had evidently found it difficult to believe that a modern civilised State could be so steeped in a doctrine of self-interest, above all considerations of moral obligation, as to break deliberately its word of honour. Even the German War Book, which permits every means without which the object of a war cannot be obtained, contains an unctuous sentence which produces nausea, in the light of subsequent events: "Some forms of artifice are, however, under all circumstances irreconcilable with honourable fighting, especially those which take the form of . . . breaking one's word. Among these are . . . deliberate violation of a solemnly concluded obligation, *e.g.*, of a war treaty." The fighting of the Kaiser's troops was to be dishonourable, that time might be gained at the price of the honour of their nation. Time was the strategical necessity. The Belgians were unprepared. They had no mobile heavy artillery, and they had only just begun to work at a scheme for re-organising their army, which could not be completed before 1918.

The King of the Belgians and his Government were supported by the people,

and stood staunch to their obligations. The story of August 2nd 1914 and following days will be told with pride in Belgium, from one generation to another, when the tale of horrors is completed, and a great State, following the tradition of obedience to moral obligations, rises from the remnant of the little nation tortured by the agents of the Kaiser's "strategical grounds." But on that evening the weight of responsibility must have been terrible. The field army was pitifully small; it had been distributed along the frontiers, with orders to fire upon any foreign troops that set foot on Belgian soil. One Division, in Flanders, faced England; two faced France; one at Liège faced Germany; two more and a Cavalry Division were in reserve. The Belgian forces were ill-equipped to meet the trained millions of a perfectly organised nation, all specialised for war. Mobilisation had not been completed. In the circumstances, to order a *levée en masse* would have been perfectly in accordance with International Agreements, but the time was too short. Proper armament was not available, and proper organisation would take time. Sporadic and unorganised resistance by the civil

population could cause but little delay to the enemy, and would give excuse for reprisals to a ruthless opponent. Orders were therefore issued broadcast to civilians to take no part in hostilities, and to offer no provocation to the invader. The forts of Liège and Namur were manned, and the Belgian field troops distributed to check the invaders, falling back first to the line Diest—Namur, and ultimately to the shelter afforded by the Antwerp forts, where their organisation and equipment were completed.

Let us get back to the Kaiser's armies, massed roughly on the line Aix-la-Chapelle—Malmédy. They must have numbered about 300,000 at this time. Two Cavalry Divisions leading, followed by five whole Army Corps, with two more Army Corps close behind them. To cause appreciable delay to such a vast host seemed almost a hopeless task, but the Belgian army did what they could. The German Chancellor confessed (see *Nord-Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 21st 1914) that the civilian population of Belgium at first showed friendliness, and it is pathetic, in the light of subsequent events, to read of accounts, written to their homes by German

soldiers, of the kindness with which they were received. But these soldiers were but pawns in the hands of the diabolical intelligence that launched the masses forward to race for time, in order to fulfil their strategical mission. Later on, the execution of their early orders caused the lower natures among them to deteriorate, and they committed super-bestial excesses on a scale unprecedented in the history of modern European war, but it is with the organised holocausts of slaughter of the innocent—organised arson, pillage, and ravishment—that we are chiefly concerned.

First, during the advance from the frontier towards Liége and the line of the River Meuse—and, lest the description should seem too horrible for belief, the authority must first be explained. All the evidence has been carefully sifted by trained and unbiased legal minds. The names of Viscount Bryce, Sir Frederick Pollock, Sir Edward Clarke, Sir Kenelm Digby, Sir Alfred Hopkinson, Mr H. A. L. Fisher, and Mr Harold Cox, are too well known for any one to question their good faith. Had a soldier been called to their councils, he would have been able to point out the

moral of their conclusions, and explain the meaning of the Kaiser's plea of "strategical grounds"—but the Kaiser's letter had not then been made public. To quote their own words:—

"That these acts should have been perpetrated on the peaceful population of an unoffending country, which was not at war with its invaders, but merely defending its own neutrality, guaranteed by the invading Power, may excite amazement and even incredulity. It was with amazement and almost with incredulity that the Committee first read the depositions relating to such acts," but the "cumulative effect of a mass of concurrent testimony became irresistible, and we were driven to the conclusion that the things described really happened."

The things that happened were that murder, rape, arson, and pillage began from the moment that the German army crossed the frontier. We must be more precise, because these words have been made so familiar to us by events of the past three years that they pass almost unheeded. We will not dwell on the narrative, or cover the whole area; we will take as typical the village of Herve and neighbouring hamlet

of Melen, both close to the frontier on the way to Liége. Five Uhlans came to the village, followed by a German officer and some soldiers in a motor, who called to a couple of young fellows, standing about thirty yards away. The young men were frightened at their demeanour, and tried to run away. The Germans fired and murdered one of them. This murder was a prelude to the burning and pillage of this and the neighbouring villages, to indiscriminate shooting of civilians of both sexes, and organised execution of batches of selected males. Houses of Herve were set on fire, and fifty men, who escaped from them, were taken outside the town and shot. At Melen forty were shot, and in one typical household the father and mother were shot, the son wounded, and the daughter died, after being repeatedly outraged. At Herve again, four days afterwards, over 300 houses were burned, mounted men shooting into the windows to prevent the inhabitants escaping. Similar scenes of terror occurred in most of the villages eastward of the Meuse: we will not expatiate on the horrors. Officers directed the incendiaries, who worked methodically

with the special equipment issued to them before leaving their own land. The foresight of the Great General Staff and attention to detail were wonderful. Valuables were removed from the houses before their destruction by officers who guarded the plunder, revolver in hand. The perpetrators of these outrages were sober, they had not yet been maddened by the drink which helped to inspire some of the wilder excesses of later days. The guns of the Liége forts, aided by field troops, covered the main road, and inflicted losses on the Kaiser's advancing army. Enraged at these losses, and exasperated at the delay, the commanders, brought up on the rule that every means of war is permissible if the object cannot otherwise be obtained, thought that they could cow the spirit of the Belgian nation by ordering horrible cruelties, and thus further the Kaiser's "strategical grounds," the rapid move through Belgium. The killing was part of a deliberate plan, and, with this incentive, the German officers and men soon accustomed themselves to the slaughter of civilians.

Enough has been said to enable us to imagine the devastation of a countryside,

peaceful and prosperous so few days before, between the River Meuse and the frontier. Accounts show that it was soon strewn with the corpses of murdered civilians of both sexes, done to death by bullet or bayonet. There has been no attempt to justify this organised horror on the plea of provocation. The people had been cautioned by Civil Governors of provinces and Burgomasters of towns to offer no provocation to the invaders, and the German Chancellor has certified that the population at first showed friendliness.

Let us go on with the invaders into Liége, and so enter the Triangle of Terror. After a gallant resistance the Belgian field troops were driven back by weight of numbers, but some of the forts held out until the 16th and 17th of August. They were knocked to pieces by very heavy howitzers brought against them on the 12th of August and following days. Some of the forts continued as long as possible to fire upon the German columns that were crossing the Meuse. The exasperation at the delay may be judged by the means adopted to bring about their fall, when legitimate methods of attack failed. On August 16th, 200 unoffending civilians



were herded out of a village and told that, unless a certain fort surrendered by noon, they would all be shot. The Germans assaulting another fort drove defenceless Belgians in front of them. The forts ultimately surrendered.

On August 19th the German soldiers gave themselves up to debauchery in the streets of Liége. At 5 P.M. on the 20th, a citizen was warned by a friendly German soldier not to go out that night. The trained incendiaries soon got to work on the houses, the fires raged through the night, and the inhabitants were either burned or shot when trying to escape. The fire brigade was prevented from extinguishing the fires, but their carts were used to transfer to the Town Hall the heaps of civilian corpses that cumbered the streets. From some of the burning houses only the men were prevented from escaping. The women and girls were spared immediate death by fire, bullet or bayonet. Evidence of their subsequent treatment is given in the Report of the Bryce Commission.

## CHAPTER IV

Belgian Spirit—Organised Atrocities—Strategical Necessity  
—Movement up the Meuse and Sambre Valleys—  
Andenne—Namur—Tamines—Montigny—Charleroi —  
French and British Advanced Troops—British Soldiers  
—Movement from Liége to Aerschot, Louvain and  
Brussels—The Belgian Army.

NEITHER the horrible murders and maltreatment, eastward of the Meuse, of the Belgian civilians who had shown friendliness (German Chancellor) by acts of kindness (letters from German soldiers to their homes) to the invaders, nor the horrors perpetrated in Liége, had broken the spirit of the Belgian Government. As an additional precaution against any possible provocation by the non-combatant population, all arms in their possession throughout the country had been collected by the police and military authorities. The westward rush of the Kaiser's hordes was held up for a time by the Belgian army on the River Gette, as well

as by the garrisons of the Liége forts, but the columns pressed on rapidly to make up for lost time, opening out on to all available roads to widen the front as much as possible. The Belgians fell back by August 20th towards Antwerp, which was their base of operations.

Let us first follow the German troops that marched up the valley of the Meuse. Some crossed to the north bank between Liége and Huy. Some, further to the southward, moved on Namur, and up the Sambre Valley. Organised atrocities were continued by these troops without a semblance of provocation. A small detached portion of the Belgian Field Army offered such opposition as they could to delay the vast forces on their front, and, after some time, French troops were met with, who had been pushed forward into Belgium after the Kaiser's "strategically" necessary violation of the frontiers and the cruelties perpetrated by his armies. Instead of overcoming the resistance of their combatant foes by honourable warfare, every conceivable trick was played by the advancing German troops to save their skins at the expense of defenceless civilian men, women, and children, who fell into their

hands. International Conventions, signed by the German Government, were freely disregarded; acts were performed about which International Law is silent, only because it will not admit the possibility of their ever being contemplated. Time had to be saved, and "strategical grounds" satisfied. If, by excesses committed on the civil population, the national spirit of Belgium could be crushed, the troops might be disheartened, resistance would then be overcome more rapidly, and Time would thus be saved. The end would justify the means.

We will follow up the valleys of the Meuse and Sambre from Liège to Charleroi, the base of the Triangle of Terror, and see what deeds were considered permissible on the plea that the object—turning the flank of the French army—could only by such methods be obtained. We will only take a few examples, selected out of many.

Take first what happened at Andenne on the River Meuse, about two-thirds of the way from Liège to Namur. Belgian troops were contesting the advance of the invaders, but evacuated Andenne at 8 P.M. on 19th of August, blowing up the bridge over the River Meuse as they went. The Germans

occupied the town by the evening. The next afternoon some shots were fired from the *other side* of the Meuse, and the Germans at once burned and ravaged in Andenne, and massacred about 400 of the inhabitants, some of them in cellars in which they tried to seek safety, and some on the river-bank to which they had fled. The town was then sacked. The survivors of the massacre were made prisoners, forced to clear away the corpses of their friends, and then used as a living screen for a pontoon bridge to save it from the fire of the Namur forts. The proceedings concluded with a night carousal in the Square on wine that had been looted; the women survivors were forced to give three cheers for the Kaiser, the author of their terrible sufferings, and to sing "Deutschland uber Alles."

We will pass on to Namur, which was a recognised fortress. Neither the few Belgian troops, nor the guns of the forts, were able to cause much delay to the invaders; the forts were silenced and the place was entered by German troops on the 24th of August, after three days' heavy bombardment. A Division of the Belgian Field Army was nearly surrounded, but succeeded

in withdrawing, and joined their main army at Antwerp *via* Havre and Ostend. On entering Namur, the Germans opened fire on unarmed civilians, who had offered no resistance, and killed 140 of them. They then set fire to at least 140 of the houses, and shot the inhabitants who tried to escape from death by burning. Further up the River Sambre, at Tamines, similar massacres took place, including the cold-blooded murder, at close quarters, on the village green, of a little girl and her two brothers, for no apparent reason, but that they stood and looked at German soldiers. Further up again, at Montigny (there is evidence that all arms in Tamines and Montigny had by this time been handed in to the Mayors by the civilian population), the German troops came in contact with French troops, who opened fire from a hill beyond the village. Immediately the German incendiaries began to destroy the town by fire, murdered some of the peaceful civilian inhabitants, collected men, women, and children, and herded fifty of them on to the bridge over the Sambre, where they were kept for a day or two as a screen against attacks on the bridge by French troops. Not only had the inhabi-

tants of Montigny offered no resistance, but they had given the Germans food, cigars, soap, and anything they wanted on entering the town. Of similar outrages in Charleroi and Marchienne, further up the river, we will not treat. Increasing resistance by the French army was met with at this point, and on the French left the "contemptible little army" of Great Britain was beginning to arrive to try to stem the advance of the great armies which moved relentlessly forward, leaving their trail of burning villages, murdered civilians of all ages and both sexes and outraged women and girls.

The policy that brought the little British army there requires some explanation, although Mons, where they made their historic stand against overwhelming odds, is some way outside the Triangle of Terror. When indications of the coming German invasion of Belgium became too definite to be ignored, British officers had worked unceasingly to train their men to the highest point of efficiency, in case the Kaiser should cast all honour aside, and sanction the plans on which the great General Staff were known to be engaged. They knew that the British people would never use their army for

aggression; but they believed that they would rise to the occasion to defend an honourable obligation if, and when, the Germans violated the neutrality of Belgium to make an unprovoked attack upon the French nation. They knew that British statesmen could never sanction a plan to try and save all Belgium at the outset, because it would be impossible to do so without sending an immense army forward in time to stem the invading torrent, and keep the Kaiser's hordes within their own frontier line. We could not do this effectively without being the first to violate Belgian neutrality. The great General Staff would then be able to hoodwink the German people, even more completely than they have actually succeeded in doing, into the idea that they struck at their neighbours for reasons of defence.

We leave the little British army preparing to make their stand against the hostile masses threatening to engulf them, and return to Liège to follow the German armies in their movements north-westward and westward. The Belgian General Staff estimate that, by the 18th of August, there were three German Cavalry Divisions and



six Army Corps in Belgium north of the Meuse, followed by five Reserve Corps. The strength of such a force would be about 500,000. These were the masses destined to be swung round the French flank in the great plan. They had further to go, and speed was all-important. We will see how the Kaiser's "strategical grounds" were interpreted by his army in this area in the light of their official instructions, which tell them that "by the means of conducting war is to be understood all those measures which can be undertaken by one State against another in order to attain the object of the war, to compel one's opponent to submit to one's will." They may be summarised in the two ideas of "Violence and Cunning," and "what is permissible includes every means of war without which the object of the war cannot be obtained." The object here was to race an army across a peaceful country, of which the invaders had promised repeatedly to respect the neutrality. We will now follow the Germans up the side of our triangle running from Liége to the north-west.

It is desirable to note the important railway line Liége—Louvain—Brussels, for reasons that will appear later. The use of

this line was necessary to the success of the German plan. A strong cavalry screen was pushed ahead from the neighbourhood of Liége, and met opposition on the line Diest—Tirlemont, from troops guarding the left flank of the Belgian army holding the line of the River Gette, which they held most skilfully and gallantly against all attacks up to the 18th of August, using their railways to strengthen whatever part of the line was threatened most seriously. On 19th of August, the railway back through Liége being now available to bring up supplies, the German army was able to push forward in crushing strength, and drive the little Belgian army northward to the shelter of the advanced forts of Antwerp. There was no resistance whatever to the occupation of Louvain itself, and only weak resistance, early in the day, in Aerschot by Belgian troops, who retired before the German masses. All arms there had been collected from the inhabitants, and notices signed by the Burgomaster had been posted on the walls, warning them not to take part in hostilities. The perfectly legitimate opposition by Belgian troops in Aerschot seems to have infuriated the Germans at the delay

and losses caused thereby, and they at once began to apply the same brutal methods that had left a track of smoking ruins and blood of the innocent behind them all the way back to their own frontier. The houses were fired into, and hostages were collected until they had herded together 200, some of whom were invalids dragged from beds of sickness. The town was looted, shop-windows broken and shop-fronts ransacked. After a round-up no arms could be found, except one sporting gun, used for pigeon-shooting, which was produced voluntarily. The hostages were then released, but the Germans were obviously determined to pick a quarrel, and far worse was to come.

By 7 P.M. many of the soldiers were drunk. A single shot was fired at that time—there is no evidence by whom or where—which hit no one, and promiscuous fire was immediately opened upon unoffending people walking in the streets. Drunken soldiers started firing in the Square opposite the Burgomaster's house, and the Germans stated that a general or colonel had been killed in that house by the fifteen-year-old son of the Burgomaster. There is evidence that the boy was with his father and mother.

in a cellar at the time, sheltering from the firing and attacks on the houses. The usual organised orgy of arson and murder followed. Houses were set on fire, and inhabitants escaping from them shot down in the street. The next day the Burgomaster, his son, his brother, and numerous other civilians, were taken out and shot in cold blood under the direction of a German officer. Similar collective murders of civilians were carried out in the villages near Aerschot on the night of the 19th of August, without any provocation whatever being given.

It will be noticed that, whenever perfectly legitimate opposition by Belgian troops was encountered during the advance, the Germans at once wreaked a horrible vengeance on unoffending civilians. Their procedure was similar in each case—organised arson by incendiary soldiers, regularly trained and equipped for the purpose, combined with murder of the fugitives from the burning houses. It was deliberately adopted as a method of cowing the Belgian nation, thus reducing the prospects of fighting with the Belgian army, and avoiding all delay in complying with the Kaiser's strategical

necessity of hurling great masses of troops on the flank of the French army on a certain prearranged date.

Brussels was entered by the German army on the 20th of August. The plan so far had been successful. The Belgian people had been stupefied by the sudden advance into their territory. The gallant resistance by the garrisons of the Liège forts and the field army had not stopped the advancing hordes of invaders. Terrible vengeance had been exacted upon innocent and unoffending civilians for such delay as the Belgian soldiers had been able to effect. The main Belgian army was now to the northward of our Triangle of Terror, and favourably situated to strike a blow at the German communications, which would cause further delay, and so jeopardise the success of the whole operation.

## CHAPTER V

Lines of Communication—How Defended—Belgians Retake Malines, 25th August—Atrocities in Villages—Louvain, 25th to 28th August—German Chancellor, 2nd September—Termonde and Alost in September—Summary—Military Success of German Policy.

WE cannot grasp the motive for the horrors perpetrated by the Germans near the apex of the Triangle of Terror without first studying the nature of modern armies and their requirements for life and movement as living organisms. We can no longer treat them as counters on a chess-board. We must think what it means to move masses of men over a devastated countryside, in order to grasp the meaning of "strategical grounds," as applied to the defence of lines of communication.

Assume that the armies of invaders which poured westward from the line Aix-la-Chapelle—Malmédy reached half a million men. It is difficult for us to conceive the

conditions attached to feeding such a horde, unless they are collected in a large town, and have access to streets of well-provided shops for their daily needs. Let us make the rather fantastic assumption that the whole population of Birmingham—a town with about half a million inhabitants—decide to go for a week's picnic in the open country fifty miles away, and that they give their orders to the shops of Birmingham to send their food to them daily. Imagine the traffic along the roads leading to the picnic place, and the need of railways to carry the heavy daily supplies. If the picnickers are all hungry men in the prime of life, taking hard exercise, they will expect about 900 tons of food alone to be sent out to them every day, or about 6300 tons, if a week's supply is sent in bulk.

It is true that our comparison is not exact, because an army can carry some food, both on the men and in the wagons, and they can get a certain amount in the country during a march, but these supplies are soon exhausted, and not only food but ammunition, which is very heavy, forage, which is very bulky, and many other things, must constantly be sent to it. "Lines of communication" is the

current expression for the roads and railways by which supplies and stores must constantly be poured forward to an army in the field. Without them it will no longer be an army, but a vast mob, which will soon melt away, and scatter to satisfy the cravings of hunger. Let us change the metaphor. Compare such an army again with a diver, under water, depending for his very life upon the air-pipe which he trails behind him. Then think of the railway line, Liège—Louvain—Brussels, etc., and other railways and roads to the southward of it, leading in the same direction. Their security was as vital to the German armies as so many air-pipes would be to a line of divers under water. It was a strategical necessity to guard them against the Belgian army, and to use as few troops as possible for the purpose. All the strength they could collect was required for the smashing blow round the French flank, crushing out of existence on the way the little British Expeditionary Force, if it should try to intervene. Let us study the methods of warfare which Violence and Cunning—the ideals of the great General Staff—considered permissible, on the plea that the objects of the war could not otherwise be attained.



We must make every allowance for moral deterioration, which the crimes they had been ordered to commit had produced upon the most evil natures amongst the soldiers. There are some in all armies, as there are amongst the civil population. The deeds of such characters in the German army, when beyond the control of their superior officers, are too horrible for repetition, and we will confine ourselves to the organised cruelties, adopted deliberately, to save troops for guarding the lines of communication. It suffices to note that the German soldier did not earn from his enemies the tribute offered to the British soldier after the South African War—"He is always a gentleman."

We left the German northern army in occupation of Brussels on the 20th of August, having occupied the villages between the southern forts of Antwerp and the army's line of communication through Louvain. The great army reached Mons on the 23rd of August, where the British delayed their advance. Notice the position of Malines, and especially of Louvain, and its importance as a railway centre, remembering that the Belgian army was to the northward, behind the Antwerp forts. The Belgians

moved southward, and drove the German troops out of Malines and villages in the neighbourhood, on the 25th of August. If the Belgian army could reach the railway line near Louvain, a strong German force must be diverted from its mission in the main battle against the French and British, in order to drive them off the line of communication of the great army. From Louvain important railway lines ran to Brussels, Mons, and Charleroi, and back to Germany *via* Liège. Again the policy of wreaking terrible vengeance on unoffending civilians was reverted to, and from this time onward into September the northern portion of the Triangle of Terror became a shambles of innocent blood. The callous savagery and blood-lust defy description. The German troops retreating before the Belgians behaved like incarnate fiends. Firstly, in Malines, dead bodies of women lay in the streets evacuated by the Germans. In some cases they may have been killed in the action by rifle fire, but a German soldier was actually seen to drive his bayonet into the back and out at the breast of one woman, strip the blouse off a younger woman who was with her, and mutilate her

horribly while still alive. There is evidence in other cases of women being killed with the bayonet in Malines. Then, along the road to the southward, corpses of bayoneted women and girls, some of them outraged and horribly mutilated, lay in the path of the advancing Belgians. The depositions of eye-witnesses reek with descriptions of cruelty which the mind of man can hardly conceive as having occurred in Europe since the Middle Ages. The studied object of these "means of war without which the object of the war could not be obtained" appears to have been to induce the Belgian soldiers to stay their steps, lest each advance should lead to similar treatment of their own relatives and friends. One Belgian soldier found in his father's house four corpses, each with both feet cut off just below the ankle and both hands just above the wrist—his father, mother, brother, and sister. Driven nearly mad by the sight he mounted a horse, rode off towards the German army, and was not seen again.

The incidents we have referred to occurred in the villages near Malines, and on the roads from Malines to Louvain and to Brussels. Some of the deliberate and

cruel murders of small children are too bad to repeat. They were probably committed by drink-sodden criminals, whose evil natures had grown rapidly and ripened luxuriantly in the dung-bed of Prussian "military necessity," which is controlled by no laws of morality.

The German reverse at Malines on 25th of August led to an outbreak of atrocities in Aerschot and other villages which had already suffered so terribly, and in Louvain, a name which for ever will be associated with the dishonour of the German army. We will repeat briefly the well-known story.

Like all other places in Belgium invaded by the Germans in August 1914, Louvain was occupied by them without encountering any opposition from the civilian population. The slight opposition by the Belgian army at Aerschot, occupied on the same day (19th of August), led to the most cruel vengeance being wreaked upon unoffending civilian men, women, and children, but there were no Belgian troops in Louvain at the time. Attention has already been drawn to the importance of the place to the German armies, as a post on a vital line of com-

munication. The Germans were in peaceful occupation from August 19th to 25th, when the Belgian army advanced through Malines to within about four miles of Louvain. In the evening of that day the firing was heard to the northward, and there was an alarm and stampede of wagon horses. Germans retreating in disorder were mistaken for enemies, and fire was opened upon them by their own men in the town. Then the usual organised horrors began. Streets were set on fire by the carefully equipped incendiaries (the foresight and attention to detail of the great General Staff are wonderful), men, women, and children who tried to escape were shot down, and others were herded together and driven to the northward to screen the garrison from any attacks coming from that direction.

Next morning the Belgian army had not advanced, and the danger appeared to be over, but, doubtless owing to the military importance of the railway line, the Germans decided to make sure. They tried for security by their usual method—terrible vengeance on the peaceful and helpless civil population, instead of by the recognised method of using troops to drive the enemy's

forces away from the neighbourhood. On the 26th of August destruction by fire and terrible massacres went on. The savages even conceived and carried out the idea of burning the University, with its wonderful library, and the Church of St Peter, in order to induce the Belgian Government to give up the struggle, and cause their army to desist from its attacks upon the critical lines of communication. On August 27th an announcement was made that the city was to be razed to the ground. At that time crowds of hostages from other places had been driven into Louvain, after suffering many cruelties and terrible privations. These, with thousands of men, women, and children from Louvain itself, were divided up into large bodies. Some were driven in bulk into the Belgian lines at Malines and elsewhere, to make sure that the horrors should be recounted in the proper quarters, and that the tortures that had been inflicted should, if possible, be effective in producing the desired result. Some were packed densely into railway trucks, where they were kept for days, without food or drink, standing in old horse-dung. These were taken to Germany by train in this pitiful state—

men, women, and little children—and trailed round as a raree-show for jeering German crowds to rejoice over.

For the individual horrors and cruelties inflicted during this illegal seizure of hostages, and driving them about from one place to another, reference must be made to the Bryce Report, and other books.<sup>1</sup> This book is written to point the moral of the outrages, rather than to recite them again. It will suffice to say that, amongst the masses of innocent civilians who were subjected to the so-called hostage policy, many old people and little children died, or were murdered, and many children were born. A few agents of the Kaiser's strategical necessity retained some of the shreds of their soldierly honour by expressing regret at the nature of the orders which they were compelled to obey. Let us repeat that there was no armed resistance by the civil population, and even if, driven mad by the cruelties, they had tried to defend themselves, they could not have done so, because they had given up their arms before their torturers arrived.

<sup>1</sup> For instance, *The German Fury in Belgium*, by L. Mokfeld (Hodder & Stoughton). *The Agony of Belgium*, by F. Fox (Hutchinson).

On September 2nd the German Chancellor made a lying communication to the Press that, contrary to International Law, the whole civil population of Belgium was called out. They were not called out, and if they had been, it would have been in strict accordance both with International Law, and even with the German War Book itself. In order to inflame the hatred of the misled German people, he added that Belgian girls had gouged out the eyes of German wounded, and cut the throats of soldiers sleeping in their houses. No evidence has ever been presented of any such occurrences. When reading the recital of the horrible and superbestial cruelty to women by individuals, or groups of soldiers, beyond the immediate control of their officers, it is conceivable that some people might make allowances even if the victims in their agony had turned upon their torturers.

We are not dealing with moral deterioration of the individual agents of States acknowledging no law but that of self-interest, but rather with the collective action of such agents on the plea of "strategical grounds."

On September 11th the Belgian army



made another sortie, and this time they took Aerschot, and other villages in the neighbourhood from the Germans. Again they found corpses of the helpless in their path, including children, one of two or three years old, crucified to a door, and one of two years old pinned to the ground by a lance.

The villages of Termonde and Alost lie somewhat outside the Triangle of Terror. Termonde was partly burned down on the 5th of September, with the usual taking of hostages and use of them as a screen in the direction from which attack was feared. At Alost, where there was fighting with Belgian troops, similar horrors occurred, and it was explained to the living screen of unarmed and defenceless civilians that they were being made to pay for the losses sustained by the Germans. At both places the civilians had given up their arms before the invaders arrived.

We have completed our catalogue of cruelties applied to the defenceless in this part of Belgium in the early days of the War. "Murder, lust, and pillage prevailed on a scale unparalleled in any war between civilised nations during the past three centuries," as the Bryce Commission concludes,

after studying the evidence exhaustively, and applying every test familiar to trained legal minds. The horrors were ordered by higher authority for a specific military purpose, and they began and ended punctually on certain dates, in accordance with orders. From these dates, and the military situation at the time, it is easy to deduce the meaning of the plea of strategical grounds. The Kaiser sanctioned the General Staff plan to violate the neutrality of Belgium, which Germany had repeatedly guaranteed, because the most effective way to crush the French nation would be to take them unprepared, and hurl a vast mass on to the flank of the French army. The horrible atrocities in Belgium during the passage of this great force were deliberately prescribed, in order to take the heart out of the Belgian army, and lessen the prospects of resistance which would delay the movement at a critical time. The still worse atrocities after the great army had swept forward were deliberately prescribed to secure the safety of lines of communication, which were vital to the maintenance of the forces in the front line.

From the point of view of military strategy, the Germans succeeded—in so far as any

military plan can succeed when all moral factors are ignored—but, so far, the loss of the German soul has not gained them the whole world. Whether it ever does will depend upon whether the peoples of the earth who have joined in the great Crusade remain staunch to their great mission, putting all else aside until their cause is successful.

## CHAPTER VI

Operations of Belgian Field Army—The British Expeditionary Force—Strength of German Armies North of the River Meuse—Belgian Army Advances on Louva—German Policy of Terrorism “on Strategic Grounds.”

THE operations of the Belgian Field Army are referred to incidentally in other chapters, but in order to realise the correct attitude of the Belgian Government, and the military measures they took to uphold neutrality, it is desirable to add a short account of the distribution and movements of the army. They had six Army Divisions and a Cavalry Division. Their total strength was about 117,000. When relations between the Great Powers were strained, one Division was placed in Flanders, facing England, two along the French frontier, and one about Liège, facing Germany. All had instructions to open fire on any foreign troops setting foot on Belgian soil. When

a German invasion was proved to be imminent, four Divisions were concentrated on the line of the River Gette, one Division (the 3rd) and a Brigade (the 15th) being about Liége, and one (the 4th) about Namur. The force at Liége was faced by three German corps, and outflanked. To avoid being surrounded it fell back on to the River Gette line on August 6th. The Germans entered Liége on the 8th. Some of the forts held out till the 16th and 17th, firing on the invading columns crossing the Meuse, and delaying their advance. The main army defended the River Gette line skilfully against tremendous odds until the 18th of August, when it was compelled to fall back north of Malines behind the shelter of the Antwerp forts. Antwerp was the base where all the stores were collected, which accounts for the army retiring to the northward, instead of falling back to the westward to prolong the Franco-British line. After the invasion the Belgians also hoped, by attacking lines of communication, to force the Germans to employ against them an army which would otherwise be used against the French. The 4th Belgian Division was obliged to fall back from Namur on the

23rd of August to avoid being surrounded. They passed through France and rejoined their main army near Antwerp in about ten days.

The map shows the relative positions of the Belgian and British armies on the 23rd of August. It also shows roughly the northern portion of the French army on the same date. After the violation by Germany of Belgian neutrality, the line of deployment of the French armies to meet the Germans extended all the way from Charleroi to the Swiss frontier, shown on the inset map.

We now come to the little British Army, the original Expeditionary Force. The mobilisation in Great Britain began on the 5th of August, the day after the German masses had poured across the Belgian frontier. Up to the 23rd of August four complete Divisions, the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th, and five Cavalry Brigades, about 80,000 men in all, composed the army under Sir John French. On the 24th of August another Brigade of 4000 joined, and on the 25th of August the 4th Division. The British had only about 80,000 men to stem the torrent of German armies on the line

Condé—Mons and towards Charleroi, on the 23rd of August. For that battle and the subsequent heroic retreat, the total number of British troops employed was only about 100,000.

Of the eleven German Army Corps reported by the Belgian General Staff to have been moving north of the River Meuse, two Reserve Corps were left to face the Belgian army. If this estimate is correct, the little British army must have fallen back constantly combating the advance of an immense army of nine corps—about five times their own strength—motor transport being freely used to move up masses of German infantry against the footsore marching troops, who often stood at bay during their historic retreat to the Marne. There the tide turned, and the ultimate issue was determined.

It has been necessary to make this digression to bring out still more clearly the importance of the triangle, Malines—Charleroi—Liége. The resistance of the 3rd Belgian Division and the Liége forts, the opposition of the Belgian army on the River Gette, and of the 4th Belgian Division at Namur, all caused loss of time. The

policy of terrorism in Belgium was deliberately conceived to overcome this opposition rapidly. The steady resistance of the little British army and their French Allies caused further loss of time which imperilled the whole strategical plan. On the 25th of August, when success was in the balance, the Belgian army moved through Malines on the vitally important railway junction at Louvain. Anxious for their communications, and afraid of further delay, the Germans exchanged their whips for scorpions, and the policy of burning, of torture, and of murder was intensified "on strategical grounds."

In the next chapter we will follow the influence on the military situation of their moral failure.



## CHAPTER VII

German Military Success—Moral Failure—Results on the Military Situation—The Great Crusade of the Nations—Prussian Militarism—Hopeful Outlook—Conditions for Victory.

By keeping their intentions secret, by hurling their vast army into France in an unprovoked attack at a time of profound peace with that country, by repeatedly lying about their intentions to the Belgian Government, by breaking their word and violating the neutrality of Belgium, and by the ghastly cruelties inflicted on the civilian population, the Kaiser's Government and great General Staff obtained a great advantage, from the purely military point of view, in the early stages of the War. These measures enabled them to overwhelm and press back the British and French troops on the left flank of the French army, and very nearly to reach Paris. Had they done so, there would have been but little chance of effective action by

the Anglo-French army for a long time, and a large mass of German troops would have been available for heavy blows in the East, or wherever the great General Staff decided to employ them. All movements and supplies had been worked out to the day. Complete success was prevented by delays caused, partly by the Belgian army, partly by the gallant resistance of the handful of British troops and their French Allies, but chiefly by the fine strategy of Joffre, and the great counterstroke delivered on the right flank of the advancing German masses. The German Western armies were compelled to fall back upon fortified lines, extending from the coast of Belgium to the Swiss frontier. A second attempt to burst through round the flank, this time to Calais, was frustrated by the British at Ypres, and, later on, all offensive movements to pierce the line have been hurled back by the French and their Allies during many months of desperate fighting. We have since retaken from them many commanding positions. Their strategical success has passed its culminating point. Clausewitz,<sup>1</sup> their great war prophet, recommended all assailants to

<sup>1</sup> *On War*, Book VII. ch. v.

make peace at the culminating point of success, otherwise, when the scale turns, "the violence of reaction is commonly much greater than the blow."

It is now possible to say that their plan to win the War on the Western Front has definitely failed, always supposing that there is no slackening of effort, and no divided counsels, which would affect the armies of the Allies fighting on this front. Everything now depends upon the staunchness of the nations providing these armies, and their determination to keep fast to the ideals which incited them originally to stake everything to prevent the whole world becoming a shambles of innocent blood, such as the Triangle of Terror in Belgium was in August 1914.

Let us face clearly the fact that the horrors committed there enabled the Kaiser's armies to gain military success, up to a certain point. They seized their neighbours' territory, stole everything they could lay hands upon that could be of use for prosecution of the War, and some things that could not, exacted crushing and illegal contributions in money, and reintroduced slavery, which all free nations had for a century

endeavoured to eradicate from savage peoples over whom they could exercise control.

The initial successes enabled them, with the assistance of their abundant munitions, and vast stores of barbed wire, to form with their armies a barrier behind which they have given object lessons to show what a State with no soul, subject to no moral law, can do in the name of military necessity. The vast army holding this defensive line, like all armies, has to be supplied along lines of communication leading to the rear. The terrible treatment of the semi-starving population by the invaders is done deliberately to secure the very vulnerable lines of communication without which the armies in the front line could not exist. When by slow, but surely increasing, pressure these armies were being gradually pressed back towards the frontiers violated by them three years ago, they left behind desecrated homes, burnt villages, and a ruined countryside, in the vain hope that they would thus cause their opponents to stop advancing, in order to avoid further devastation. In August 1914, they left the mutilated corpses of women and children in the path of advance of the Belgian army for the same reason.

It is a military necessity which, according to their creed, makes everything permissible, to stem our advance now, and to hold on to the military advantage they gained by similar methods in the early days of August 1914.

Their own manuals of war teach them, after an invasion, to hold on to all that has been gained until their opponents "submit to peace."<sup>1</sup> They know that a reaction will generally be more disastrous than if they had really stood on the defensive originally.<sup>2</sup> Whether they will retain their advantage depends upon the nations from which the allied armies are drawn. Knowing that, as long as these nations hold steadfastly to their ideals, it is only a matter of time, the Germans for many months have tried to bring about divided counsels, and to revive old controversies and jealousies, dating from before the War. If they succeed, they will continue to hold the military advantage gained in 1914, and the methods which the Kaiser and his General Staff adopted will, by their success, be justified in the eyes of the German nation, which worships force, and force alone.

<sup>1</sup> Von der Goltz *On the Conduct of War*, ch. v.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, and Clausewitz, Book VII.

Let us see the other side of the picture, and, like Epimetheus, look backward first to learn the path we are travelling. We notice at once that military successes, obtained by transgressing every moral law, have really been failures on a vast scale. The German armies gained great advantages at first over the armies opposing them. At one time it looked as if the great nations as well as the small ones would fall, and the whole world would be under the Prussian heel. Then slowly, but surely, the moral forces began to prevail against military might uninspired by ideals of right and wrong. Army after army, and fleet after fleet, were thrown into the balance to defend the application of moral laws in dealings between nations, and now at last we can look ahead, confident in the knowledge that the balance of might is on the side of the right. If it were not so, as Sir William Robertson said in a recent speech, it would be better not to live on in this world.

But to get back to the effect of the German crimes upon the military situation. The first result of the unprovoked attack on France was to throw the great British fleet and the little British army to the side

of the selected victim of the State which acknowledges no law, human or Divine. It transpired afterwards that Britain was bound by no alliance with France. The sympathy between the two countries was very strong, and Conferences had been held between military Staff officers to study what the military arrangements should be, if ever the preparations obviously being made in Germany to violate the neutrality of Belgium should end in action. There was no chance whatever of Britain helping France if she attacked Germany, but it was possible that the British nation would send their small army to help her, if attacked without provocation. The grave dangers ahead had never been realised clearly by the people in England from the warnings of responsible Statesmen in office. Publicists and soldiers who pleaded for adequate preparations were labelled as scaremongers, and perhaps it is not surprising that a peace-loving people should have hesitated to believe in the German schemes of conquest, or the ruthless plans being prepared to advance those schemes. The "wrong" done to helpless Belgium converted every waverer, and, with one voice, all classes, and all political

parties, supported the Government in going to war. The greatest Navy in the world was thrown into the balance against the German Empire. The "contemptible little army" was sent, just in time to stand steadfast in the path of the German Northern masses, and to play its part in upsetting the time-table of their great strategical movement. Soon afterwards the other great nations under the British Crown followed suit, and used their forces in the great cause of Liberty. Then Japan, then Portugal; then the Italians, bound by treaty to stand by Germany and Austria, if those countries were attacked, could not be deluded by the plea that a German invasion of Belgium amounted to an attack upon the German Empire. Roumania, Cuba, Greece, Siam, Liberia, China, and Brazil have joined in the Crusade. Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, San Domingo, Haiti, Peru, and Uruguay have severed diplomatic relations.<sup>1</sup> The United States of America have thrown into the contest all their vast potential resources in men, money, inventive genius and material, and by so doing have made victory not only probable, but certain,

<sup>1</sup> Also Costa Rica and Ecuador.



provided only that those who took up arms originally in defence of Liberty have the strength of soul to stay the course.

From this recital it is clear, and very hopeful for the future of humanity, that no nation, even the strongest and most perfectly organised for war, can in these days win through in defiance of all principles of honour and State morality. But it remains to be seen whether the great nations that champion the cause of justice and honest dealing can secure for the world anything better than a very brief respite from the recurrence of horrors, such as those we have described in Belgium. Mr Gerard, the American Ambassador, so well qualified to judge the German, and especially the Prussian character, has told the world that they will stop at nothing to win this War, and the only thing they respect is force. They are a powerful nation; war is the industry which they almost worship, and in which above all others they excel, and their mediæval system of autocratic Government is admirably suited for the effective use of their whole national weight to crush other nations under an iron heel. In the present Kaiser, as long as his grip on affairs may last, they have a

picturesque figure, an expert *poseur*, filling admirably the part of a Great War Lord in shining armour, relentless and terrible to all enemies of a Fatherland which they have been taught to put before every other consideration whatever. They have shown that, in order to support him, and the ideals for which he stands, they are prepared to face not only death on the field of battle, but years of hardship and self-sacrifice amongst those not in the firing line. The success of all really great causes in this world depends upon the collective amount of self-sacrifice expended in their support, and neither the German Empire, nor the world at large, will be freed from Hohenzollern and Prussian autocratic rule unless the nations, whose soldiers and seamen are fighting under the banner of freedom, remain united, each in itself, and each to all, and face hardships staunchly to the end, putting aside all controversies, and all self-seeking by classes or masses, until the great cause is triumphant.

There have been periods during the past three years when war-weariness has seemed for a time to creep over some of us. In their blind belief in force, and force alone,

as the greatest thing in the world, the Germans at such times have always provided a fresh impetus to hold on in defence of the ideals for which we originally drew the sword. A succession of horrors perpetrated by the Kaiser's Government has shown that the great cause is worth fighting for to the very last ditch, the last strand of barbed wire, and the last man. The *Lusitania* horror, the secretly conducted judicial murder of Nurse Cavell, the torture and mutilation of African natives, bombardment of undefended seaside resorts full of holiday-makers, the revengeful murder of Captain Fryatt, the sinking of hospital ships, with their freight of patiently-borne pain, skilled surgeons, and heroic women nurses, all came as fresh incentives to revive the spirit of the allied nations. The cruel and deliberate murder by drowning of a gallant crew of merchant seamen, herded for the purpose on to the deck of a pirate submarine, is another example of the same policy. So is the sinking of a convoy of Norwegian and other neutral and unarmed merchant ships and murder of their crews. So are the air raids on defenceless civilians, with the attendant slaughter of women and children.

But these deeds of horror, done to strike terror in the hearts of their enemies, have only served to remind them that it is worth while to struggle on to the end, and grudge no sacrifice which can help to clean the world of Prussian domination.

Fighting on the side of honour, freedom, and moral right against rampant force we now find, in the above-mentioned countries, nearly 1,400,000,000<sup>1</sup> of the world's population. All have joined to uphold great moral principles, none for their own gain, advancement, or expansion. Ranged on the side of ruthless force, controlled by no moral law, we find the German Empire, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria. Some countries have not yet declared either for "Violence and Cunning," or for honest dealing in the conduct of human affairs.

Even the most faint-hearted cannot doubt that a triumphant end for the great Crusade is in sight, however far off it may seem to be. There is one serious danger, and one only, which yet may rob us of the victory: the great danger to the nations, like the greatest dangers to individual souls, comes

<sup>1</sup> See page 66. The figure includes the population of Russia.

from within, and not from without. It comes from those, whether representing political parties, classes of the community, doctrines and shibboleths, or only their individual selves, who have no sense of proportion, and seek to advance their own smaller causes while the issue of the greatest cause of all is still hanging in the balance.

## CHAPTER VIII

Militarism—The Abstract Noun—Restitution and Reparation—The Germans and their Rulers—Strategy for Decisive Defeat—Concentration of Effort—The First Step—Guarantees—The Future—A Parable.

So far the word "militarism" has not been used in this book. Avoidance of the expression has been deliberate. "To write jargon" (we are told by an expert in literature), "is to be perpetually shuffling round in the fog and cotton-wool of abstract terms; to be for ever hearkening, like Ibsen's Peer Gynt, to the voice of the Boyg exhorting you to circumvent the difficulty, to beat the air because it is easier than to flesh your sword in the thing."<sup>1</sup> The expert in the use of the pen (Sir A. Quiller-Couch) who wrote those words must sympathise with the expert strategists who, early in the War, were exhorted to smite at abstract objectives, such as vaguely defined

<sup>1</sup> *The Art of Writing*, Quiller-Couch.

areas of territory, or even at so nebulous an affair as the "prestige" of a hostile nation, because it was too difficult to flesh their swords effectively in that very difficult Thing, the German army. Jargon, the vague and inconclusive word-currency of those who have something to conceal, is no longer current in the land. It has now been recognised that soldiers, who have spent their lives in the study and practice of their profession, are right in maintaining that the only objectives for our forces to strike at are the armies of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria, and that, however difficult the task may be, the issue of this War depends upon the overthrow of the German army. In the War of America against Spain, and the Wars of Japan against China and against Russia, armies had a very large hand in the destruction of fleets, the equally important, and for Great Britain the most important, objective to the strategist, but those fleets were more accessible to armies than the main German fleet, which is protected by mine-fields, by land defences, and by its own great army.

After much sacrifice of the lives of soldiers and losses in ships, in learning the art, we

are all expert strategists nowadays, and the nation would look with grave suspicion on military operations undertaken for any purpose excepting the overthrow of the armies of Germany or her Allies. Not only the Navy and Army taking part in the actual fighting, but the whole nation, is sharing in the labour and self-sacrifice required to ensure this result.

The soldiers engaged in the struggle require not only munitions and money, but inspiration by the soul of the nation in whose cause they are fighting, and for this to be possible, the nation must understand clearly the issues at stake. In explaining these issues, it is impossible to avoid altogether the use of abstract terms, but it is important only to use expressions that convey the same ideas to all. After studying carefully what happened in the Triangle of Terror in Belgium in the first month of War, it is not difficult for any one to understand clearly that Restitution, Reparation, and Guarantees must, in Belgium, mean that the Germans must get back over the frontiers they violated in 1914, repay the money contributions illegally exacted from Belgian towns, and leave the Belgian people



free and unfettered to shape their future destiny in their own way. The lives of the men, women and children tortured and murdered to further the Kaiser's strategical purpose, can, unfortunately, never be restored; the historic monuments, shrines of faith in the Almighty, valuable libraries, and wonderful works of art, can never be replaced, but the ruined homes and factories can be rebuilt with the help of indemnities. Restitution and Reparation can convey no other meanings about Belgium. Of Guarantees more anon.

Militarism is not so definite a term. Its use is dangerous, because it conveys different meanings to different minds. To some extremists, many of whom are now fighting gallantly in the front line, it used in time of peace to mean everything that is connected with the word soldier, from which, through the Latin, the word is derived. Even soldier saints, like John Nicholson, Charles Gordon, and Stonewall Jackson, came under the ban of their severest condemnation. In the old peace days, which seem so long ago, such anti-militarists and little navy-ites were very much in the eye of the public, and it is not by adopting

their views now that the nation is likely to inspire the army to fight to the end in the great cause. Let us try and find a better definition for the abstract term "Militarism" before we can use it with confidence, or inscribe "anti-militarism" on the banner under which we are ready to endure all things required of us.

Sir Edward Grey (now Viscount Grey of Fallodon), who seems, as we can all now learn from blue and white books, to have stood out in the great crisis strongly and straightly for moral principle in international relations, defines a militarist as one "whose ideas and thoughts run entirely on military considerations, wholly material, who forgets to estimate, and cannot estimate, the spirit and soul which exists in nations." As a definition, this approaches more nearly to our requirements. It does not entail opposition to all military training, all discipline, and all self-sacrifice in the country's cause, but it fails in one point. Every military man is taught with his A B C that in military matters the moral is to the material as three is to one, so military considerations can hardly be wholly material. The American President defined militarist nations as those

who use their armies to attack their neighbours ; other great men use other definitions, and altogether there is so much vagueness, so much fog and cotton-wool, about the abstract word " Militarism," that it seems a most elusive object in which to flesh our swords. Let us leave it, and get back to something more definite.

This book has only dealt with a little bit of the War, but enough has been said to explain the Kaiser's strategical grounds for invading Belgium, and the tortures inflicted on the population in the name of military necessity. We know the ideals of his great General Staff—Violence and Cunning ; we know what they mean by violence in war, but we probably shall never know all that they mean by cunning. The cancer of deceit, which through their agents has permeated and poisoned the growth of all other nations, will not be eradicated and dragged completely into the light of day for many decades, perhaps for a century, but a clear light is now shining on the methods by which the Hohenzollern Government has misled the people of Germany and the cat's-paw nations that have been deluded into sharing in their crimes.

Pan-Germanism and expansion of Empire, at the expense of others, were not ideals likely to inspire the masses—the human cannon-fodder class of the population—to do the bidding of their rulers, so they were educated to believe the farcical invention that Germany was in danger of being attacked by her neighbours. Then the Russians were incited to mobilise by an announcement in a Berlin paper that the Kaiser had already mobilised. Then the French troops were falsely credited with crossing the German frontiers, and with violation of the neutrality of Belgium. As no aggressive deed could possibly be invented about Britain, the German people were told that she had adopted a deep and perfidious policy of egging on others to attack Germany, while saving her own skin. If the German peoples really believe these fables still, the world will begin to think that after all it is possible to “fool all of a people all the time!”

This brings us nearer to the end of our quest for something more definite than the abstract word “militarism” that the nations in the great Crusade can strike at, if the Belgian horrors are not to be repeated in

our lifetime. All their efforts must be directed against those who were responsible, firstly for the German plan of expansion at the expense of all Europe, and secondly for deluding the German people into the idea that they were in danger of attack, in other words, the arrogant Prussian military class, whose domination over policy only a strong Chancellor like Bismarck could control.

Then we have the succession of fantastic fables, published during the War, to inflame the hatred of the German peoples against their enemies. Sir Edward Grey was represented as the most wily of diplomats, jealous of German progress, and secretly plotting for years to bring about the downfall of the Germans! When it was impossible to prevent news leaking out about the treatment of the population of the Triangle of Terror in Belgium, some of the cruelly ill-treated Belgians were brought into Germany, and shown round to hooting crowds as those who fired on German troops (with arms that had been taken away from them before the German army arrived), presumably on the principle that seeing is believing. Only on one occasion was the jeering of bystanders stopped for a time, when the poor

herd of hostages was seen to contain so many women, one of whom held up a little child as a sample of the victims of falsehood. And so on with similar deceptions through the three years that have since passed by, while the German people hold out and endure privations, because they still believe in the tales, told them by their rulers, about purely imaginary aggressive designs of neighbouring nations. All other virile nations would do the same, if similarly deceived into the idea that they had been attacked by others scheming for their downfall.

Here then we find something more definite to strike at, the Prussian Military party, the deceivers of the Germans, with the Hohenzollern dynasty of War Lords at their head. These are the priesthood of force, and it is force, and force only, that the Germans worship. The emblems and instruments of German force are their Navy and their Army. Of the Navy this book does not treat. The great cause will never be won until the German army has been decisively defeated. The allied armies, inspired by the justice of their cause, are now quite capable of bringing about this defeat, and

they will do so, even if it takes ten years, provided only that they are supported by their nations in men, money, in war material, and above all in spirit, which is all-important now that patience and endurance have become such vital factors in the struggle.

Let us glance at strategy again. To defeat a great army decisively the blow must fall in such a direction as to throw it off its lines of communication. Direct blows in front may press an army back along these lines, as the Russians were pressed back to Harbin in 1905. There they were reinforced, and there was nothing in the military situation to prevent their advancing again. The war ended for other reasons. In past wars, when two great armies faced each other, neither could get at the lines of communication of the other excepting round a flank. If neither flank of the German Western army can be turned, there remains another route, through the sky, by which blows at the lines of supply may possibly be struck in increasing strength as the numbers of available aircraft increase. The wonderful inventive faculty and resources of the great American Republic have now been added to the strength of the allied cause.

Unless the German retreat can be hastened by some such methods, the process of forcing them back will be a slow one, and we must have no wavering or divided counsels while the armies are patiently performing their mission. The Russian situation may free large German forces for other employment, and prolong the War.

If this book helps any waverer to remember something of issues that may have been forgotten for a time, it will have served its purpose. No peace is conceivable until the German armies have been forced back over the frontiers they violated in August 1914, with all the accessories of horror that have been described. Reparation and Restitution will then be possible, but Guarantees against recurrence may not even then be in sight. The only thing the Germans respect is force. If the great exponent of force, the Kaiser, and his much-vaunted instrument of terror, the Army, have not done all that was expected of them, then their invincibility in the eyes of the people may be doubted, and doubt may lead to distrust of the wild assertions about other nations, on which the fears of the populace have for many years been fed.



No army, not even the German, can stay the course in a war of endurance without the continued support of their nation. Even Herr von Kuhlmann has recently acknowledged this in the Reichstag in the words:—  
“Our foreign policy can only be successful if it is backed by the consent of the broad masses of our compatriots, and if it represents the will of the people in its entirety.”<sup>1</sup>  
When once the nation, seeing the armies driven back, realises that overwhelming might is no longer on their side, then right will become more interesting. Inquiries will be made into the origin of their rulers’ assertions. Evidence will be asked for, and the truth will at last be known to the German nation. Whether they will still show the extraordinary docility and gullibility that they have so far exhibited is a question for the future, and for themselves. If they are still content with Prussian domination, and with Hohenzollerns, dependent upon foreign conquest for keeping their warrior dynasty on the throne, then there will be no Guarantees for neighbouring nations, and the time for peace will not yet have arrived. If, after the German armies

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, October 11th 1917.

have been driven back over their western frontiers, the Kaiser still governs the German Empire with absolute power, and still holds in thrall Austria-Hungary, Servia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, Turkey, Poland, part of Italy, and most of Roumania, then the German dream will have been realised, and ample resources will be available for a far more formidable attack upon Belgium and France within a very few years.

But one step at a time. Concentration of effort is the secret of success in war, as it is in all human enterprises, and no mean effort is required to compel the German Western army to return from whence it came. We must be prepared to face the methods that will be adopted to stay the advance of the allied armies. Experience has taught us that the German General Staff will stick at nothing. Violence and Cunning are their acknowledged ideals in the conduct of war, and no laws of morality, fair dealing, or soldierly honour have affected either their violence or their cunning. They will try by every means to divert us from our purpose. They will still use the armies of their deluded cat's-paw Allies in operations all over the world, in order to draw their

opponents away from the decisive point. It was said with truth in Germany that in the first phase of the War they were successful, because their plans were sound, but in the second phase they escaped defeat because of the mistakes made by their enemies.

They will probably continue to leave behind them a devastated countryside to induce the French and Belgian Governments to stay the advance of their armies, in order to avoid further devastation. Their agents will continue to sow dissension between classes, or between political parties, in hostile countries. By futile threats of invasion of England, and efforts to raise a rebellion in Ireland, if not in England itself, they will try to force us to keep here troops which they fear will otherwise help to smite them out of Flanders. By air raids they will go on trying to strike terror into the population of our towns and induce them to stop the War, although former raids have only served to stiffen resolution to see it through to a victorious ending. There are few remaining neutrals worth conciliating in their opinion now, and ruthless piracy on the high seas will be intensified. No international agree-

ments, and no moral laws, will be regarded. It is possible that they may invent methods of warfare more despicable than those they have already devised. Whatever they can do, the issue is certain if all nations who have joined in the great Crusade hold steadfast to their purpose. The balance of might is now, at last, on the side of the right.

The future of the human race depends upon how this might is directed, but one step is clearly indicated: to force back into Germany the German army, that cruel instrument of terror which perpetrated the horrors of the Triangle of Terror in 1914. Let us make no mistake, let us realise clearly that, if the German army had reached the shores of Britain, the seed of hatred sown by the Prussians would have produced a crop of fiendish deeds, beside which the horrors in Belgium were nothing. That the British had no feeling of hatred for the German people as a whole is beside the point. The Belgians had none, the civilian population were pitifully friendly when the invaders first arrived. Hideous cruelty was then, as usual, the child of fear; by a deliberate campaign of falsehood, the people of Germany were deluded by their rulers

into believing that they were in imminent danger of attack, and to "hack their way through" was represented as their only chance of safety. The quarrel of the Allies is not with the German nation, but with the rulers who so deceived them, and will deceive them again about any other nation, however remote, selected as the next victim for attack.

When our victory over the German army is complete, it will be for the Germans as a whole to say whether they will continue to trust their deceivers. Should they do so, the only guarantees for the safety of other nations against invasion by the disciplined savage horde that poured into Belgium in 1914, will be the possession of vast armies organised in immediate readiness to hurl back the invaders. As long as there exists in Central Europe a nation of seventy millions ready at any moment to invade their neighbours' territory "on strategical grounds," in defiance of all moral principles, and all international agreements, there can be no guarantee for security but superior force. The rulers of the German Empire, to use what they look upon as the cannon-fodder classes for their schemes of conquest,

must continue to work upon their fears, and delude them into the idea that perfectly peaceful neighbours are plotting their destruction. These rulers depend for their absolute power upon aggressive wars, ending in pageants of victory which give a spectacular demonstration to the people of the effectiveness of Force, which they worship and fear. These after-the-war problems cannot yet be usefully discussed. Let us finish the war first, and, in case there should be any doubt how to make use of the might now on the side of the Allies, let us end up with a parable.

Once upon a time a Woman was walking peacefully in her Garden, when a Burglar, who lived next door, jumped over the hedge on his way to the house of her other Neighbour. He was knocking her about, stabbing her, and tearing off her jewellery and clothing, when some Policemen came upon the scene. Should they engage upon an academic discussion about how to lessen the prevalence of crime in the world, or the best means of converting that particular Murderer to better ways? Should they not first tear him away from his victim? Even so with Germany and Belgium.

## CONCLUDING NOTE

THIS book was written when the Russian armies were in the field in great force, and the Central Powers were obliged to employ large armies to face them on the Eastern front. The situation in Russia has had an adverse effect—for a time—upon the military situation. This adverse situation is temporary, and can only defer the issue. The loss, either temporary or permanent, of the help of Russia will be more than balanced when all the naval, military, financial, and economic resources of the great American Republic have been thrown into the scale in the Great Crusade against the Prussian domination, which brought about the martyrdom of the population of Belgium.

In the meantime the Germans are trying to influence the military situation in their favour by sowing discord in the nations opposed to them, and by reviving the falsehood about the "Fatherland" having been threatened with attack in 1914.





## APPENDIX

THE following catalogue of crimes perpetrated by the German army, in pursuit of the Kaiser's "strategical grounds," in and about the Triangle of Terror in Belgium (August-September 1914), is taken from the Bryce Report Evidence, where dates, places, and further details will be found. After full investigation, the Commissioners came unanimously to the conclusions that "murder, rape, arson, and pillage began from the moment the German army crossed the Belgian frontier." That "this killing was done as part of a deliberate plan." That "they seized the civilians indiscriminately and killed them . . . without the least regard to guilt or innocence." That the excesses "were committed — in some cases ordered, in others allowed—on a system and in pursuance of a set purpose. That purpose was to strike terror into the civil population and dishearten the Belgian troops, so as to crush down resistance and extinguish the very spirit of self-defence"; and they

added, to explain some of the most bestial and revolting of the horrors: — “When an army is directed or permitted to kill non-combatants on a large scale, the ferocity of the worst natures springs into fuller life, and both lust and the thirst of blood become more widespread and more formidable.”

The catalogue is arranged geographically, beginning with the Liège district, and then following the Liège—Charleroi and the Liège—Malines sides of the Triangle. The Bryce Commission reported in 1915 on such evidence as could be collected at the time. Since then, there is much more available. The most disgusting of the horrors have been omitted from these lists.

### LIÈGE AND DISTRICT (Chapter III.)

(1) Village of Herve burned, soldiers shooting with revolvers through windows. (2) Lady shot at close range on her knees, begging for mercy, with crucifix in her hand. Body left lying in road for three days. (3) Fifty men shot. Forty men shot. (4) Father and mother shot, daughter of twenty-two outraged and died of violence. (5) Man, woman, and girl of nine killed and lying in

a heap. (6) Old man of seventy hanged to a tree. (7) Woman of sixty-three and child murdered by German officer. (8) Fifty-seven men killed together by shooting and bayoneting. (9) Twenty men and little girl of thirteen killed. (10) Woman shot. (11) Civilians roped and used as a screen, and thirty killed (several cases). (12) Man, woman and two children murdered. (13) Four men tied together, tortured with bayonets and lighted cigarettes in ears and nostrils, then murdered. (14) Two women repeatedly raped and fifty-six men shot, including their husbands. (15) Boy (son of Burgomaster) murdered by cutting throat and cutting off tongue. (16) Woman and several men murdered by bayonet in chest. (17) Baby dragged from woman's arms, dashed to ground and murdered. (18) Boy of twelve, hand cut off for clinging to parents who were being thrown into fire. (19) Girl of ten, ear cut off. (20) Village (Vise) burned. (21) Burgomaster's brother, and man, woman, and baby murdered. (22) Two men shot and buried alive. (23) Men shot on each side of a woman, fell wounded and groaning at her feet, and were bayoneted to death. Murderers try to kiss woman, who escapes. (24) Woman, eight and a half months pregnant, and girl of sixteen, each raped by two German soldiers. (25) Woman found naked, tied to a tree, mutilated, and murdered.

Two little children bayoneted, lying murdered at her feet. (26) Houses burned and seven men and women trying to escape from them shot. (27) Numerous similar cases in Liège. Men killed and women saved for worse treatment. (28) Violation by an officer of girls of eighteen and twelve years. (29) Old and deaf Burgomaster shot. (30) Small baby decapitated; mother stripped and violated by officer and two men, then horribly mutilated. Horror seen by husband, who broke through window. (31) Whole village burned and wrecked (Hermée), many killed. (32) Child of five and a half months ripped open, parents killed.

### LIÈGE—CHARLEROI (Chapter IV.)

#### (MEUSE AND SAMBRE VALLEYS)

(33) Large proportion of population of Andenne massacred, chiefly refuging in cellars. (34) Houses of Seilles burned, inhabitants massacred. (35) Defenceless man in Huy tortured, and killed slowly by hanging. (36) Houses burned at Bioulx. (37) Houses at Fosses pillaged. Woman defending her honour bayoneted. (38) Two old men and a young one shot (Romsée). (39) Belgian wounded and farmer's family burned in farm (Marchovelette).

(40) Peasants hacked to pieces with swords (Bounine). (41) Two women shot, two violated (Geldbrassée). (42) College professor murdered by officer in presence of his family, house burned (Temploux). (43) Namur set on fire and inhabitants killed when escaping from burning houses. Hospital set on fire deliberately. (44) Cripple of thirty-six and paralysed old man of eighty shot in cold blood. (45) Boys of fifteen, twelve, and eight years, and girl of fifteen murdered. Old man of seventy murdered (Tamines). (46) Many civilians killed indiscriminately. Woman killed by bayonet in head and breast, and girl of seven bayoneted in neck and killed (Tamines). (47) Burgomaster murdered and houses burned. (48) Houses burned, civilian men shot. Father shot standing over son's corpse, and compelled to keep his eyes upon it (Monceau). (49) Crowd of civilian "hostages," including priests, roped in and used as a screen for German troops from enemy's fire. Houses burned, many inhabitants murdered. Crowd, chiefly women (including nuns) and young girls, herded on to a bridge all night as screen from enemy's fire (Montigny). (50) Civilians, including women and children, kept in line in front of German troops as screen from enemy's fire. Girl murdered hiding in an oven. Several men murdered. Hand cut off in one case (Jumet).

(51) Houses set on fire. Inhabitants shot. Woman burned (Bouffioulx). (52) Houses burned. Inhabitants taking refuge in cellars deliberately suffocated there with burning straw, officers superintending (Charleroi). (53) Young girl stripped, outraged, mutilated, and murdered (Marchienne). (54) Father, mother, and son murdered by German officers. Houses burned (Couillet).

[As Dinant lies so far outside the area, the horrors committed there have been omitted].

### LIÉGE—MALINES (Chapters IV.-V.)

(55) Houses looted and burned. Burgomaster and his son and brother and about one hundred and fifty other civilians shot in cold blood. Population, including priests and a woman with a three-days'-old baby, driven out of houses and herded about as "hostages." Women shot and bayoneted (Aerschot). (56) Women and baby killed (Rodenburg). (57) Priest of Gelrode horribly ill-treated and murdered (Aerschot). (58) Baby, three or four months old, strangled in mother's arms. (59) Girl of sixteen violated repeatedly. Boy of seven bayoneted. Girl about eighteen stripped, murdered and mutilated. Boy of nine beheaded. Priest

murdered and legs cut off. Girl about eighteen stripped, mutilated, bayoneted, and crucified to a door. Houses burned, women and children escaping from them shot (Aerschot). (60) Woman twice outraged. Seven men shot in cold blood. Woman bayoneted and hanged to tree. Woman shot (Gelrode). (61) Lady shot by drunken officer, husband forced to bury her. Houses burned. Woman killed (Campenhout). (62) Girl violated repeatedly and driven mad. Men shot in cold blood (Rotselaer). (63) Woman stripped and repeatedly violated. Men bayoneted. Houses burned. Two women violated. Woman murdered (Tremeloo). (64) Ten women killed, two seen to be bayoneted, one mutilated horribly, and fifty murdered. Boy of eighteen bayoneted and hands cut off (Malines).

(65) The following are some of the horrors discovered in the path of the Belgian army in Hofstade, Sempst, Weerde, Elewyt, and other villages when the German troops retreated before them at the end of August—some have been omitted as too disgusting to repeat:—Old labourer shot. Boy burned. Old woman killed. Young girl killed with bayonet. Man and two women killed with bayonet. Young woman's legs cut nearly off. Boy of ten hanged by neck and bayoneted. Woman killed with bayonet. Boy

of twelve bayoneted. Two women killed. Boy of sixteen bayoneted. Man shot in cold blood. Two girls killed, one mutilated horribly. Man killed apparently by blow of rifle-butt. Old peasant woman killed, mutilated, eyes gouged out. Woman stripped and bayoneted. Woman bayoneted. Two girls bayoneted. Girl stripped and repeatedly violated in public. Woman killed and horribly mutilated. Boy killed and mutilated, legs cut off. Woman of sixty-five killed with lance. Woman and boy of nine killed with bayonet, boy's hands cut off. Two men killed and mutilated, both hands cut off. Boy of seventeen or eighteen, both hands cut off, left to bleed to death. Man killed in house before children. Old woman bayoneted. Father, mother, son, and daughter killed and mutilated, both hands and both feet cut off. Man in bed bayoneted. Woman and two little girls bayoneted. Man bayoneted to death and horribly mutilated. Pregnant woman bayoneted. Two women killed and horribly mutilated. Six children killed, and one or both feet cut off. Child of ten months stripped naked and transfixed with lance. Child of about five years hanged to a tree. Old woman murdered by blows on head, apparently with rifle-butt. Woman bayoneted. Old man of seventy killed, apparently strangled. Two little children



bayoneted. Three children killed and hands cut off. Parents hanged. Women and two children buried alive in hole boarded over and weighted. Girl hanged head downwards by feet to two trees ; killed. Man burned alive. Boy killed, hands cut off. Woman bayoneted. Six little girls killed with bayonets. Two women murdered (shot). Woman and two young daughters killed by officer. Boy of fourteen killed with bayonet. Man shot by officer with revolver. Boy shot. Woman and two children burned. Man bayoneted. Villages burned and men driven out and taken as "hostages." Woman mutilated ; son burned alive. Old man beheaded. Woman stripped and ripped open ; killed. Boy bayoneted. Man bound and burned alive. Man strangled. Young man killed, hands cut off. Three little girls and little boy, hands cut off and left to die. Woman, throat cut. Seventeen girls stripped and violated, twelve mutilated and murdered. Man decapitated. Two children bayoneted. Pregnant woman violated and horribly mutilated in presence of husband, who was then decapitated. Man stripped, tied up to ring in wall, horribly mutilated and murdered. Woman stripped, violated and killed. Boy of three or four killed, hands and feet cut off. Woman and three children, hands and heads cut off. Three men bayoneted. Little girl, four to

six, bayoneted, after being missed twice by rifle shots. Thirty wounded Belgian prisoners bayoneted after battle. Civilians bound and driven ahead as screen from enemy's fire. Man bayoneted ; others, including a woman, forced to smell the blood on the bayonet. Girl of seven or eight bayoneted. Woman decapitated, and arm and leg cut off. Child of seven decapitated. Child of three killed in mother's arms. Whole family murdered for trying to defend young girl. Two girls stripped and hanged to tree. Woman and young girl murdered. Woman repeatedly violated, found in a cesspool alive. Child, eight months, hands cut off. Child of two or three, both hands and feet cut off. Man, women, and children thrown dead into well, insulting message chalked up.

*N.B.*—The above evidence is chiefly given by Belgian soldiers who drove back the Germans. Many of the villages were set on fire and the male inhabitants driven with the German army ; those who did not at once obey being instantly murdered.

(66) The following are some of the deeds perpetrated in Louvain, beginning when the Belgian army moved towards the town from Malines :—Houses burned, hundreds of inhabitants from them—men, women, and children—shot. Man robbed of 7800 francs by officer. Defenceless

men (including priests), women, and children, herded together, bound, beaten, stoned, spat upon, and driven long distances in country by soldiers. Houses plundered. Old man of ninety (artist) thrown out of house and left to die of exposure. House burned. Many hundreds of "hostages"—men, women, and children—taken by train, starving, into Germany, densely crowded in horse-trucks full of horse-dung, and jeered at by German crowds; spat upon by German women and children. Many were driven mad. Men shot for having penknives in pockets. Women tortured with thirst prevented from drinking by German soldiers. Woman with day-old baby, and sick and aged people driven ruthlessly about as "hostages." Priests selected for the most brutal treatment. Patients turned out and hospitals burned. Refugees in cellars shot through gratings. Men chosen haphazard and shot in cold blood. Herd of civilians used as screen for German troops. Young girl repeatedly violated and killed, also bayoneted. Little girl of six years slowly cut to pieces in presence of father and mother. University Library burned. Much looting. Many children died, and some babies born in one crowd of "hostages." A woman driven mad.

*N.B.*—There is much evidence from those who were herded out of Louvain and driven about the

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country of the scenes of horror on the country roads and in the villages traversed by German troops in their retreat before the Belgian army on the 25th of August.

Details about Termonde and Alost have not been included in the above extracts, as these places are outside the area dealt with.

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The official title of the long volume from which these data have been taken is *Evidence and Documents laid before the Committee on Alleged German Outrages*. It was published in 1915, price 6d., and is obtainable from H.M. Stationery Office, Publications Department, Aldwych, W.C.

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## PRESENT SITUATION IN BELGIUM.

M. Troelstra, a leading Dutch Socialist, has recently published a pamphlet upon the treatment of the Belgian population by the Germans. Apart from military damage, he estimates that, on a moderate estimate, 5000 Belgian civilians have been murdered and about 2600 houses burned with the connivance and often by the direct order of the German officers. Up to November 1917, a War contribution of £60,000,000 had been levied on a population of about 8,000,000; this does not

include enormous private fines, and pillage, and destruction to the extent of about £320,000,000. Raw materials, machinery, metals (including church bells and bronze statues), silver plate and works of art have been seized in vast quantities and sent to Germany. Belgians of both sexes and of all ages have been enslaved to make munitions for use against their own countrymen. All possible steps have been taken to ruin the possibility of trade competition after the War. Strenuous and ineffectual efforts have been made to set the Flemings against the Walloons.

M. J. C. Van der Veer, the London Editor of the *Telegraaf*, wrote the following to the *Times* on January 3rd :—

“The manner in which the Germans are carrying on in Belgium is worse than atrocious; it is staggering. I have just received a letter from a prominent Dutchman in Holland, who writes :

“‘The situation in Belgium cries to Heaven. If it goes on, that country and its people will be wiped out. Neutrals ought to consider it their duty to threaten Germany with intervention, if she does not evacuate Belgium. But how can we move the Scandinavian countries, the South American States, Spain, Switzerland, or even Holland, to take that step? They, and also we who live next door, calmly let that murder go on.

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One shudders at the thought of it. Thousands of Belgians, even boys, are forced to work on the front. Women have to perform military work. The forests are cut down, the factories emptied and even pulled down, the dwelling-houses plundered, the railways broken up. The death-rate among the children in Belgium is terrible and is also high among grown-up people. It is a crime unheard of in the modern history of Europe.'

"Thus far the prominent Dutchman, who asks me in despair: 'What can we do to prevent the complete destruction of Belgium and her people?' His description, terrible as it is, gives yet a vague idea of the shocking sufferings inflicted by the Germans on that martyred people. From another reliable source I learn that the Germans have not only removed from Belgium all metals and all machinery, they have lately also requisitioned all household linen of the Belgian homes, including bed-sheets and pillow-covers. It was recently stated in our paper that even Belgian girls of twelve and thirteen years have been sent to work on the Yser front, where they must sleep in barracks on straw. The 5,000,000 inhabitants of Belgium are not only underfed to a terrible degree, they must suffer also from cold, for the price of coal from their own mines is so high that few can

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buy it. Reparation to Belgium becomes well-nigh impossible, the undermined physique of her people will soon be beyond repair. I am asked whether the British Labour movement could not publish a statement that it will hold the German workers responsible if they do not take timely action to prevent the murder of the entire Belgian nation."

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These quotations should suffice to rouse the nations and armies of the Entente Powers to new efforts, and to a set determination to continue the great struggle against those who worship War, and describe it as "an act of violence which knows no bounds," either those of honour, morality, or international obligation. The cause of the Entente Powers is the cause of the human race against unrestrained force, accompanied by unlimited cruelty and bestiality.











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