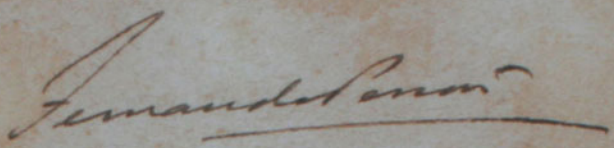
THE GERMANS IN BELGIUM



THE GERMANS IN BELGIUM

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LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

THE GERMANS IN BELGIUM

EXPERIENCES OF A NEUTRAL

BY

L. H. GRONDYS, PH.D.

FORMERLY PROFESSOR OF PHYSICS AT THE TECHNICAL INSTITUTE OF DORDRECHT

LONDON

WILLIAM HEINEMANN

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PREFACE

In the following pages I have adopted the form of a little record of travel. Certain facts I witnessed justify the conclusions I have drawn. At the close of my sojourn in Belgium the wholesale shootings and destruction that had taken place still caused legitimate amazement, for the German theories had not as yet been revealed. Thus in my narrative I may seem to insist upon the almost accidental character of these misdeeds. At the beginning of the month of October I should have had no right to believe in a regular system of devastation and extermination.

But since this we have been enlightened by documents of great importance—first, General von Stenger's order of the day, directing that no prisoners should be made, and that of General von Bissing, which affects to justify the conduct of the Germans in Belgium; then numerous articles in German newspapers and reviews, which reduce these scandals to an organized system.

The thesis which inspires the Germans is that of the minimization of effort and suffering. According to this theory, the Massacre of St. Bartholomew was justified because, by one violent blow, it obviated a long-drawn-out religious war, and diminished the number

of victims. "Let us be ruthless," say the Germans, "that so we may minimize the sufferings of nations."

The German armies have accordingly carried on two simultaneous wars—one against the enemy's hosts, the other against the weak and helpless. Let us admit the force of cold reason, and confess that their position is strong and extremely logical. By their secondary war upon the homes of the poor, civilians, unarmed men, and the wounded on the battlefield, they have almost succeeded in disheartening citizens and discouraging combatants. In Belgium I saw citizens in the midst of ruins who had lost all hope in the future of their country.

But should not the Germans, who claim to be the educationalists of the world, know that threats and violence which do not intimidate, engender imperishable hatred? They have shown themselves very poor psychologists, for their methods have strengthened the resistance of the Belgians. Reinforcing clear conceptions of right and wrong by rage and indignation, they have rallied fainting souls and despairing hearts to the support of great and far-seeing leaders—King Albert, Cardinal Mercier, the Burgomaster Max, and many others.

By their coldly calculated methods they have made war, that splendid and terrible phenomenon, a thing of sickening horror. Will posterity be able always to distinguish between the lofty courage of their officers, the magnificent devotion of their soldiers, and the deliberately sinister misdeeds of which they have left traces on every hand?

The celebrated chemist Ostwald has lately declared that France has only attained to the "phase of indi-

vidualism." Germany, on the other hand, has arrived at the summit of "collectivism," which gives her an historic right to hegemony and suzerainty. This thesis, which has been acclaimed as original, is derived from the German philosophers of the classic period. Inaugurated by Fichte, it was made the basis of an imposing historical theory by the great patriot, Hegel. However, we must not take Herr Ostwald too literally. Collectivism—that is to say, military and intellectual discipline among a people—constitutes individualism—that is to say, arbitrary rule among the governing classes.

But this individualism, which they despise so much, and which sometimes, indeed, manifests itself in such repulsive forms among them, is the virtue of the Latin race. All the beauty of nobly tempered souls, the worship of deference to women and of kindness to the weak, generosity, chivalrous ideas—in short, the amenity of this race which they scorn, its purely individualist qualities—must of necessity be killed by their discipline.

Let us not forget that if they have attacked international law and deliberately infringed its rules, here, again, it is the Latin civilization against which they are fighting. For international law is but the codification of the instinctive virtues of France.

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BRUSSELS—LOUVAIN.

For us civilians the great movements of army corps, the combination of masses which appear to develop and fight independently one of the other, are like a game, secretly calculated and magnificently diversified by the great masters of chess. The game has no significance for us save through its results.

In Belgium, after the battle and capture of Liége, a new phase of modern war was developed. The invading troops provoked a revolt of the citizen-soul against the violation of its repose, its security, and its honour. On the other hand, this reaction has produced madness and terror in the regular armies of the enemy: an atrocious terror of explosions of the popular will, a terror which cannot be disarmed by good-humour, or discounted by the most prudent precautions.

Desirous of verifying with his own eyes the horrors imputed to the Germans, the author of these notes, a Dutchman, resolved to go to Belgium. It seemed to him of the utmost importance to hear the manifestations of the two souls: the Belgian soul, that of the individual citizen, the peaceful and industrious servant of civilization, under certain influences capable, perhaps, of acts

of savagery and cruelty; and the military German soul, that of the disciplined soldier who fearlessly carries out his orders, but who desires to find under the roof where he comes to rest between his struggles something of the peace of the home circle he has had to leave in his native country.

We Dutchmen could hardly believe the tales of cruelties said to have been committed by the good stolid Germans one sees laughing in their villages round the inn-tables, and playing skittles to the accompaniment of noisy applause.

Such were the interests which took me to the actual theatre of war, to breathe its peculiar atmosphere and experience its intoxication.

On August 19 I left for Brussels, intending to continue my journey towards Louvain and the small adjacent villages afoot, in the opposite direction to that taken by the German troops.

In the train I remarked on all sides the nervous anxiety of the people, who were inclined to see a spy in every stranger.

In Brussels the population was greatly agitated. Victories were expected. In the Place Rogier, in front of the northern terminus, crowds, at once enthusiastic and horror-stricken, were watching the automobiles unloading the wounded. The cafés were crowded. There was much discussion, and the talk at the little tables on the café terrace was extremely animated: everyone was wearing Belgian colours. Contradictory rumours were current. On the outskirts of the town the civil guard was erecting barricades.

August 20.—What a change in the town! The troop

have withdrawn. The civil guard of the second line yesterday evening received the order to lay down their arms, and have been disbanded; numerous trains have conveyed those of the first line to Termonde; the magnificent wireless telegraphic station near the King's palace at Laeken has been blown up; all locomotives have been sent off in the direction of Lille and Antwerp. Rumours pass from mouth to mouth in a low voice, spirits are downcast, indefinable fears float in the air.

Towards eleven o'clock the rumours became more definite. The Germans were to enter the town towards three o'clock. Municipal officers, unauthorized by Burgomaster Max, ran about the city removing flags and colours. When the Germans entered the spirit of the people fell. The Belgian colours were hardly to be seen anywhere. The troops which entered under the command of General Sixt von Arnim had marched from Aix-la-Chapelle, but they looked well.

I watched the faces of the onlookers. Spirits rose later, but at the moment one saw nothing but curiosity. I still wore my Dutch and Belgian cockades. One of a group of Brussels folk who had been looking at me for some time detached himself after some whispering, and, approaching me, asked me to remove the colours, because, said he, "the Prussians won't allow it." I refused. The group seemed visibly annoyed. Would they have lynched me for wearing Belgian colours?

The first impression produced by these German troops on the crowd was astonishment, then admiration. The triumphal march of the troops in the famous "parade step" sounded like the regular beat of some gigantic

hammer on an anvil. The impression made by these solidly built men, with their discipline of iron, these unexpressive faces under the dusty helmets, was one of terror mingled with respect. So these were the murderers of women, the burners of villages? And yet one found on their countenances no trace of cruel lusts, though their features had occasionally a barbaric cast. Nevertheless, they inspired a nameless terror.

An old woman who advanced through the curious crowd towards the Prussians, probably with no particular object, was stopped by a policeman who did not understand her. She tried to explain: "I had a son whom they have killed." The policeman replied in his hoarse voice: "And I, then? I have two sons in the army." The old woman, thrust back suddenly, cried out: "Down with the Prussians!" The crowd, seized with sudden terror, began to run. A young woman fell; children screamed; the German soldiers looked on, and appeared to see nothing.

In all the troops which passed during these two days in one uninterrupted procession through Brussels I noticed the peculiar timidity of the rough soldiers in face of a civilized population. Such civilization, generally considered, is perhaps not worth very much, but it implies well-being, the spirit of criticism, the incessant control of all gestures and movements, and at times merriment at the expense of others. All these Germans at Brussels made one think of the Roman legions passing through Athens, exposed to the smiles and witticisms of the population.

The superiority of the German soldiers consists of the terror they inspire. These redoubtable warriors felt

embarrassed in presence of the dexterity and complexity of this expectant population. They made an effort to adapt themselves to the urbanity which their simple soldier souls admired. Behold them disarmed!

After one or two days the capital calmed down. These terrible men were singularly subdued. The townsfolk felt themselves stronger than the invader, stronger through their quick and ever active intelligence, and the rancour which had begun to show itself. They perceived that the Germans were uneasy in presence of the enormous crowds of young men in the streets, that they suffered particularly from the uneasiness which athletes feel before weak women who ridicule them.

August 21.—I set out on foot for Louvain. At the village of Tervueren I struck an unending stream of German regiments, of convoys of artillery making for the capital. All the men were well equipped, and marched with an assured air. Huge clouds of dust rose above the roads. Little groups of people from Louvain and the villages round were painfully returning—men, women, and children—all carrying enormous bundles. As the fighting was over, they felt relieved. By way of precaution, all these poor people saluted the troops incessantly. The officers returned the salute gravely.

A convoy halted to rest; two non-commissioned officers left it, approached me, and without preliminaries declared that they loved the Belgians, but that they were obliged to burn the houses of absent inhabitants. "It's their own fault; these people ought to have stayed at home." They took me for a Belgian. I answered only by a few insignificant words, and continued my journey.

Three-quarters of an hour out of Louvain I passed a group of burned houses; the corpses of pigs and cattle gave out a horrible stench. The other houses were all pillaged. In a café I found a whole family seated despairingly, in the midst of broken glass and smashed chairs—an indescribable disorder. I asked for a glass of beer. They could offer me nothing. They explained that "the Germans were very good men, and that it was their own fault that all this damage had been done; they ought to have remained and received them properly." Apparently one changes ideas as one changes clothes! It had required but a few gruff words and a few blows of the fist on the table of an inn to upset the clearest notions of right and justice, and to soften spirits logically entitled to nourish hatred and a desire for vengeance.

At Louvain I remarked immediately that the soldiers of the garrison wore an aspect different to that of the columns I had met. Their faces were less calm, their stern discipline seemed to me to be slightly relaxed, and the smiling geniality of the German showed less through their hard masks. These fellows must surely have taken part in the pillage of the neighbouring villages.

A platoon with drums beating conducted a functionary of the municipality, who translated aloud in Flemish a proclamation of the "Kommandant" addressed to the population. Forthwith soldiers, accustomed to see civilians dragged out for punishment, ran up from all sides "to see the d——d *bourgeois* shot." They retired, disappointed, when they were told it was only something quite commonplace.

The attitude of the population was quite correct. The

German soldier seemed to me to be especially at his ease in the poorer quarters.

The town was entirely without news. During the evening I engaged in conversation with a distinguished Flemish priest, M. van Ussel, *curé* of one of the parishes of Louvain. I told him that Pius X. had just died. While we were talking a sergeant-major came up to us, and asked permission to accompany us to the presbytery. He was a Catholic, and expressed a desire at last to open his heart to a priest.

Seated at table before a modest repast, washed down with a glass of wine, the soldier felt at ease, and talked volubly. He was the only Roman Catholic in his company. Intentionally, he said, Protestant regiments had been sent to Catholic Belgium, whereas the Catholic troops had in preference been sent to Catholic Poland, against the Orthodox Russians. This topical detail will go far towards the explanation of the following story:

Our sergeant-major, named Kluck, entertained the same opinions about the atrocities committed in the villages from Visé to Louvain as were held by the majority of University-trained officers (all reservists) to whom I had spoken. "It was a shame," they granted, "but unfortunately it was necessary." The logic of this phrase has always appeared to me very complicated. I was struck by the close union of disgust aroused by the sights of destruction and the idea of obedience which entirely excluded personal responsibility.

M. van Ussel reminded him that his regiment had ill-used and shot ecclesiastics, that he had made war on his co-religionists. The man began to cry. His reply was that the military spirit is so strongly developed in them,

and that discipline made the sacrifice of individual opinions so spontaneous, that, even though deeply sensible of the horror of certain actions, no one ever protested against the orders of a superior.

The priest's reply was that the misdeeds of the troops were all the more unpardonable because before the war the Flemish people felt a great sympathy for Germany. Germany, had she respected the neutrality of Belgium, would have retained this sympathy, which even a great nation cannot despise with impunity. By the violation of territory and by the excesses committed, this sentiment of friendship, by which Germans had largely profited in Belgium, had been transformed into a hate so terrible that it would survive those living to-day, and for all time would form an impenetrable armour about this peaceful race.

Our host added that for the Catholics of Belgium Germany had represented religious peace and the liberty of the Catholic minority, whereas France was the theatre of persecution and of a terrible struggle between the Holy Sée and the liberal and modernizing forces of the century.

I ventured to point out to our worthy host that the struggle in France, in which the political power of the Church was the stake, was recent. This circumstance made him forget that in the streets of Paris a priest would never have been arrested by the *gendarmes* merely because he dared to carry the supreme consolation of the Holy Sacrament to the dying—a thing which had occurred at Berlin during the Kulturkampf. I added further that the freethinkers galled the Catholic world more by their complete indifference than the sectaries. In truth, coolness and contempt wound lovers more

than hate or fear. But indifference excludes persecution, and the heretic is a much more dangerous enemy than the freethinker.

Neither I who spoke, nor the *curé* who listened thoughtfully, ventured to see in this remark almost a prophecy. M. van Ussel seemed to believe, like many of his co-religionists, that a terrible persecution of the Church was raging in France.

After the sergeant had gone, he spoke to me of his fears lest an explosion of hatred might drive some of his compatriots to acts of violence against the Germans if the latter continued to maltreat women. He visited every day at the municipal *Maison de santé* a girl of sixteen, who had been cruelly insulted and grievously wounded by two German soldiers; they had stabbed her in the stomach with bayonets because she dared to resist them. The military authority, however, appeared to have punished these brutes.

II.

AERSCHOT.

August 22.—I continued my journey by road to Aerschot, and passed a never-ending stream of Belgian villagers. After running away in terror, they had thought better of it, and, not wishing to give any pretext to the Germans for burning abandoned houses, they were returning to their villages. I constantly met German regiments, which, as the main highways were now free, were continuing their march towards France. Across a fertile country, between high rows of trees, amidst clouds of dust, the army corps commanded by General von Kluck advanced.

As they went by, the women lowered their heads, and the men saluted. As I did not lift my hat, the soldiers from time to time made unpleasant remarks about my want of respect. Halfway between Louvain and Aerschot I sat down under the trees on the side of the road. Immediately a hundred or so German soldiers grouped themselves round me, making very uncomplimentary remarks. I took no more notice of them than if they had been so many ghosts in daylight. Without further remark, they got up and continued their route.

They were not in a normal state. Usually their faces

express a rude geniality. But the moment they have passed through danger, the same transformation seems to take place in all these simple souls; they lose their habitual mask of smiling good-humour, their eyes become haggard, a terrible nervousness agitates them. Accordingly I was told that my life would be in danger if I continued my journey. The sentinels were irritated, and I exposed myself to being hit by a chance bullet.

A column had just received orders to halt from an officer passing by in an automobile. Soldiers begged passing refugees to give them cigarettes. What a strange mentality! This army begged of those whose fathers, husbands, and children they had killed in cold blood in their absence, whose houses they had set on fire, and who would themselves—as we shall see presently—soon be imprisoned. A German Major, tall and long-bearded, riding a horse, tried to amuse the soldiers by chasing before him a donkey captured in the fields. The Major made comic gestures and laughed loudly. The houses on each side of the road still smoked, and all along the road passed an endless procession of villagers and peasants, hesitating and terror-stricken.

At last we arrived near Aerschot, passing through a number of burnt hamlets. At the entrance to the little town we were stopped by a sentry. We must await the arrival of the Captain. I told the soldiers that I was Dutch. They offered me a chair, and a non-commissioned officer, a good speaker, treated me to a discourse with a view to convincing me of the stupidity of the Belgians, who could have made heaps of money by aiding the passage of the Germans, instead of suffering the tremendous destruction, evidences of which were

all about me. I replied that I refused to discuss the matter. His comrades told the orator to be silent. The Captain arrived, and immediately handed me a *laissez-passer* (permit).

I walked through Aerschot. The majority of the houses had been destroyed. The soldiers had directed their attention with special ferocity to the images of the Catholic faith. In a house not far from the entrance to the little town a room had been hastily left by the occupants. The chairs, ranged round a small fancy table, still suggested the outlines of a family scene. On the table were six volumes of the great Flemish poet, Guido Gezelle, bound in red morocco. They exhaled a sweet poetic aroma in this modest habitation. One of the volumes had been much read. The priest Gezelle is *par excellence* the poet of the poor. The furniture was not disarranged. Two coloured statuettes, one of the Virgin in a sentimental attitude, holding a Child with saintly eyes, the other of Saint Anthony, lay on the ground, broken. In all the houses I entered later I found the same sort of profanation. One might take it to be a religious war! Was the fury shown towards the images of the saints due to fear of the prayers the peasants might address to them?

I passed into the street, and heard behind me the bitter sobbing of women. I saw a group of about thirty women, young girls and children, conducted by German soldiers. I approached and addressed them. Why were these poor people weeping? A soldier answered: "These women, with their entire families, left before the disaster. They have been looking for their houses, and have found them burned."

It went to my heart to see these unhappy people. I remembered having noticed some of them *en route*, accompanied by their fathers and husbands. I asked: "Why have you burned their houses, since these people, who were absent, could not have fired on you?"

"They should have remained. If they had received us properly, nothing of the sort would have happened."

"Where are you taking them?"

"To the church. They will sleep there to-night."

"Where are the men?"

"They are being taken elsewhere."

"Where?"

"To Germany, I believe."

I proceeded to the large market-place. The houses of the principal inhabitants of the town had been burned. Some Belgian citizens, who had taken service with the German army, told me that the burning of the town began when the Commandant was assassinated by the son of the Burgomaster. The Germans thereupon, "as was their right," shot a part of the population, among them the Burgomaster and a priest. I inquired how they knew that the son of the Burgomaster had committed this crime. They answered that the Germans saw him firing. The reply did not convince me; I saw in it simply a proof of the docility of these people.

The streets were empty. On going towards the church, which was to serve as prison for the women, I knocked at a door, already half broken in. In the house I saw nothing but the terrified faces of women. To defend themselves better, they slept together, a dozen in each habitable house. I asked them why they remained any longer in this devastated town. They

answered in a low voice that the sentinels posted along the roads prevented them from leaving.

Night fell. A thick smoke still rose from some of the houses. I entered the church to look about me. The guard stopped me at once. Here, as elsewhere later, I may add, I spoke to the soldiers more or less gruffly, and insisted on their taking me to their Commandant. The Lieutenant who was in charge, and who was on guard over the church, spoke to me politely after examining my papers. In the church, women and children, terribly fatigued, sat half-fainting on the chairs. The building, looking vast under its obscurely visible arches, was lighted by some lanterns and a few candles. The Lieutenant refused me permission to leave the town, and informed me that I probably should not be allowed to go to Louvain. Travelling in the opposite direction from the march of the armies was still permissible, he said, but not so in the same direction. I protested energetically, alleging that I was the subject of a neutral State. Moreover, I feared I would not be able to sleep on a chair, as all these poor wretches, half dead with fatigue, were condemned to do, and I was determined to enjoy a good sleep. "And I?" replied the Lieutenant. "Just fancy, I have not slept for two whole days!"

"It's your trade," I told him; "but it is not mine." In conducting me out of the church, the officer advised me to be on my guard. The soldiers were extremely agitated, and rifles sometimes went off by themselves.

A few hundred yards farther on a sentry stopped me, and took me to the Town-Hall. There a sergeant-major treated me kindly; he gave me some straw on

which to sleep in the cabinet of the municipal secretary, and invited me to eat with him and drink some wine. I asked if they had enough wine to be able to offer it to strangers. He answered that more bottles had been put at their disposal than they could possibly empty. During our short conversation he told me that a large number of citizens had been shot because the son of the Burgomaster, at the order of his father, had treacherously killed the Commandant of the garrison by shooting him from behind. German officers made the same statement to me later. After the execution, the corpses of the Burgomaster and of a priest were hung up on the front of the Town-Hall.

In the night I was awakened by the noise of shots, and I perceived the light of a house which had just been set on fire. What motive could they have for re-enacting these sinister deeds in a town occupied only by women?

When I got up, the guard again offered me wine for my *déjeûner*. Naturally I refused. The cabinet in which I had passed the night had been turned completely topsy-turvy by the soldiers. I found, however, on a table, among scattered papers, a large packet of printed proclamations, in which the Burgomaster of Aerschot ordered the population of his village to refrain from all acts of hostility against the German troops, as they would otherwise expose the entire village to most terrible reprisals. The documents were signed by the Burgomaster, with the seal of his office. I thought it therefore improbable that he had encouraged an attempt on the person of the Commandant, for he had himself distributed these notices among his fellow-citizens, who were, like himself, greatly impressed by the devasta-

tions and shootings in all the villages from the frontier to Aerschot. If the son had, in fact, treacherously killed the Commandant, he must have committed the act without his father's knowledge. Was it likely that a father should give such an order to his child? The charge appeared to me to have been invented after the deed in order to explain the execution, not only of the father, but also of the uncle of the alleged assassin.

At nine in the morning I left the Town-Hall. An officer menaced a soldier with punishment for having fired a shot during the night, and thus spread panic among the ranks of the garrison. Next door to the Town-Hall soldiers were breaking in the door of a wealthy residence with the butt ends of their rifles. They came out laden with all sorts of booty. Pillage goes on apparently under the eyes of the officers.

A convoy of military and civil prisoners, conducted by a platoon of German soldiers, left the town in the direction of Diest and Germany. Among the civilians I recognized one of the men who, leaving Louvain, had returned to Aerschot the previous night, trusting to the proclamations of the invaders. They announced that the German soldiers would live in peace with all civilians who conformed to their regulations. Germans ran up and laughed at the expense of the prisoners. The Belgian soldiers tried to smile, poor souls!

In the centre of the town a long procession of women with dishevelled hair, leading children, issued from the church. The women, exhausted by their vigil, glided along against the houses. The young particularly aroused pity. In two days all their pretty coquetry and the bloom of their gracious youth had faded.

Happy those who live in exile, and may there recover the sweet pride and luxuriance of their young lives! These poor young women, whom I saw condemned to remain without protection or support, alone in houses, all the doors of which had been broken in, seemed to me ashamed and resigned. What a terrible town! What an effluvium of death among the sentinel-guarded ruins, unpeopled save by women and by the rough troopers, on whom their lives and honour depended!

A hundred yards farther I entered a café and asked for a little milk. A tall soldier, still young, was making love to the proprietress, a woman of about thirty-five. She knew what the man wanted, and her tragic face expressed neither hatred nor pleasure. She could not serve me with what I asked. I waited, standing a little aside, and listened. The soldier felt embarrassed, and became silent. He looked at me sideways. Suddenly he went out, and returned after a few minutes with a score of comrades, who arrested me on the charge of spying. It was his revenge. They hustled me brutally and dragged me to the nearest guard-room. The woman of the café, fearing that they would burn her house, cried out: "Yes, yes, take him off quickly; perhaps he is a spy. Take him away." At the guard-room I was released after my papers had been examined, not without a lively discussion.

I had intended to go on foot to Diest and Tongres. Now I was afraid that I should be stopped and sent back to Holland viâ Aix-la-Chapelle, which would have been very disagreeable. I therefore again sought the road to Louvain, and happily the sentries made no objection.

Halfway between Aerschot and Louvain I met a convoy of waggons, escorted by a Captain and four Lieutenants. On our left the cannon boomed. The waggons stopped near a cross-roads, probably to be ready to feed the troops engaged in the battle. The Captain, a tall Junker, barred my road, and said to me: "Who are you? I saw you yesterday travelling in the other direction. Why are you returning?" I gave some reason or other, and showed him my passport. "Well, you're not to go to Louvain. When you get there you will tell what you have seen in these villages." I replied: "Why, what can I tell?" He pretended not to hear, and seemed ill-disposed, like his companions. I repeated my question. He got angry, and cried: "It is for me to speak, not you." However, after reflecting for a few moments, he said: "You can go." I therefore continued my journey.

Before this, according to what I was told, the Germans in several villages forced the peasants to be present at the executions of their fellow-countrymen, and then drove them away so as to "warn the others as to the fate they would suffer in case of resistance." Now, on the contrary, the German officers were afraid that I should spread the terrible news. They seemed to me, however, to be students from the Universities, "reserve-officers." Perhaps they felt ill at ease as they saw the traces of the passage of their compatriots.

Subsequently I was able to reconstitute the drama of Aerschot, thanks to the evidence of eye-witnesses, and of two letters of Madame Tielemans, wife of the Burgomaster, written to the Minister of State Cooreman and to the Commission of Inquiry into violations of

international law—letters which have been shown me by the Chevalier Ernst de Bunswyck.

The Commandant of Aerschot was killed, not treacherously in his bedroom, but on the balcony of the Burgomaster's house, where he was lodged. The market-place was full of soldiers. Suddenly shots rang out without any apparent reason. Indescribable chaos followed. The soldiers fired at random on the neighbouring houses. The Commandant fell fainting, and was carried by his brother-officers into a room, where he expired. After his death it was determined to make reprisals. The Burgomaster was arrested, as well as his brother and his young son, who had been wounded the day before by the ricochet of a bullet, and who, when the riot in the market-place began, had concealed himself with his mother in the cellar of the house. The adjacent houses were likewise searched, and twenty-seven persons were taken at hazard in the cellars. An attempt was also made to seize the senior *curé* of the town. He had fled; another priest was therefore taken in his stead. As the wife and daughter of the Burgomaster could not be found—they had succeeded in escaping—a price was set upon their heads.

The thirty persons arrested, who could not be suspected of a shadow of complicity, were led towards a trench. Their eyes were bandaged, and they were shot, with the exception of a certain Mommens, whom it was decided to pardon, but who had to help in burying the bodies of his fellow-citizens. This individual was told that when the work was finished he was to go to Louvain and tell what he had seen; the idea, no doubt, was that his story should terrorize the town.

III.

LOUVAIN.

Sunday, August 23.—In the afternoon, at three o'clock, I returned to Louvain along the canal. Before the celebrated Town-Hall, fair and white, like an ivory shrine enlarged in marble, the German guard stood calmly. No uneasiness was apparent, yet the civil population was talking in undertones of the incredible harshness with which hostages of the upper class had been treated. Anger, too, was general at the insults proffered to women in the suburbs. The relations of the populace with the army of occupation were as good as circumstances permitted. In the course of the evening I saw, sitting on a bench before one of the houses, some German soldiers talking smilingly with some young girls in the presence of the parents, who seemed reassured. In the vegetable market a soldier made a feint of kissing the cheek of a young girl. Shortly afterwards she was called back to her home, and did not return.

I entered the Café Sody, Rue de Bruxelles. The proprietor, with his two daughters, was serving the customers, almost all of whom were soldiers, and a few officers. Everything worked smoothly. Two German soldiers came in, belonging to a reserve regiment (regiments of the first line had been sent to France). They

called for a glass of beer, and opened a conversation. " We Germans," they said, " are good people," etc. The proprietor and his daughters served them, smiling a little, but without answering, and withdrew immediately.

The reservists tried to enter into conversation, usually with some such words. They felt it necessary to excuse themselves. Owners of property and fathers of families, they understood the gravity of this war of devastation. Young soldiers talked quite differently. Pointing to the ruins, they exclaimed: " Well, let them dare to fire on us. See what happens when you attack the German Army."

The town was cut off from outside news. The soldiers spread the most sensational reports. Some of them told me they had crossed Holland to come here. They had " cents " (Dutch money) in their pockets, and they showed small packets of cigarettes supplied by a Maestricht firm. These incidents had certain consequences for me. In two hotels consecutively in the Rue de Bruxelles—one of them the Lion de Flandres—they withdrew, on one pretext or another, the room they had already assigned me the moment I described myself in the hotel register as a Dutch subject.

These rumours of the violation of our territory were obviously absurd. I approached two officers, who had just arrived from Germany, and asked for news. They replied that " die Esel " (the asses) did not understand even the names of the towns they passed through, and that their regiments, like the columns which preceded them, had to make a considerable détour to avoid our territory, which was guarded against violation by the German regiment of which the Queen of Holland is the

honorary Colonel. The packets of cigarettes in question were sold by an enterprising Dutch firm in Belgian territory. Dutch " cents " are current in the Belgian zone close to our frontier.

M. van Ussel, whom I met again, offered me hospitality for the night. To his ordinary functions as *curé* he added those of prison chaplain. Cardinal Mercier had begged him to take over this duty. He was a typical hospitable Flemish priest, whose mind had been broadened by the atmosphere of the University of Louvain. He appeared to have forgotten that I was not of his religion. I regretted, however, that my relations with so amiable a man could not be closer.

After dinner he received a visit from two seminary students, one of them the nephew of the Cardinal. They were still agitated by a hostile demonstration on the part of German soldiers, of which they had just been the object. M. van Ussel told me that this was the attitude generally taken by the Germans towards priests. He himself found the greatest difficulty in getting permission to leave his house after eight in the evening. The military authorities refused it to him for two days, although he was working in the Red Cross ambulance at the bedside of several German wounded, and had been summoned twice during the night to Catholic soldiers. It was late when my worthy host showed me to my room.

Speaking of the Belgian clergy, several officers had made remarks to me which I repeat exactly as they were uttered. According to them, " the Flemish priests would in general be disposed to regard the conquerors as men like themselves, but called by other circumstances, and under orders they dare not disobey, to play

another part." In many cases the Flemish *curés* voluntarily offered to German soldiers, exhausted by fatigue, their own bedroom and that of their aged housekeeper. They treated officers with the greatest cordiality. As to the Walloon priests, German officers considered they must be on their guard with them. They put them under close guard, and even during the night placed a sentinel with a fixed bayonet at the door of their bedrooms. In these cases race hatred must be stronger than difference of faith.

Monday, August 24.—In the morning I visited the art treasures of the ancient town of Louvain. Then I proceeded to the Rue des Moutons, opposite the Convent of the Béguines, to the house of one of the leaders of the Flemish party, Professor Scharpé. His wife received me in her pretty home, dating from the seventeenth century, but newly restored. The Professor, a well-known linguist, had gone out with the director of a large dairy, the greater number of whose horses had been taken by the Germans, who destroyed the stables; now, authorized by the Commandant, he was scouring the outskirts to collect his scattered cows, if possible, and procure milk for the town.

In the new phase upon which the Belgian resistance had caused the war to enter things passed practically as follows: The German soldiers began by driving out the inhabitants, and by systematically destroying works, factories, and farms. Next, the officers allowed those who persisted in remaining to occupy themselves with reprovisioning the town. It was thus that M. Scharpé and his friend, the dairy manager, duly provided with passports, were able to scour the neighbouring villages

from four in the morning to six in the evening, to induce the country people to bring provisions to Louvain. They saw everywhere the devastation caused by the German regiments.

M. Scharpé came home late in the evening, tired to death. He had the impression that the Germans had completely succeeded in terrorizing the population. He had travelled with his companion in a little dairy-cart. When they met fugitives at the cross-roads, they all—men, women, and children—raised their arms in token of submission. The poor people had given up hope of ever meeting friends, and would not believe that people who could pass freely in a cart could be Belgians. The Professor had cried out to them, almost in tears: "In Heaven's name, my good people, lower your hands." The little children, from four to five years old, would not obey. They stared at the strangers, their eyes full of terror, and continued their pilgrimage, their arms raised.

Professor Scharpé told me that even that day he had seen in the villages the bodies of victims of the German armies. The inhabitants of the villages, witnesses of their crimes, had fled in the direction of Brussels. No one remained to bury the dead. It seems to me useless to repeat all the stories I was told. One, however, is worthy of note. The village of Lienden was fired because one of the inhabitants killed a German soldier. The latter, along with a companion, had violated a young girl after tying her parents to chairs. The father freed himself from his bonds, seized a gun, and slew one of the aggressors. The German officers ordered fire to be set to the houses, and the parents of the young girl, bound again to their chairs, perished in the flames.

Among other corpses seen by M. Scharpé was that of a two-year-old infant, killed by bayonet-thrusts, and that of a man of seventy. The latter still held a crutch in his clenched hand. He bore the mark of a bayonet thrust on his chest, and his legs were burnt to a cinder. This old man was a professional pilgrim who enjoyed a certain reputation for sanctity in the region. He had been several times to Lourdes and to Rome, and passed his life in prayer. M. Scharpé proposed that we should visit the neighbourhood with his friend, the dairy manager. I purchased a camera to take pictures, which would serve as useful evidence.

Tuesday, August 25.—We left early to get the necessary passports. My friend introduced me to the Rector of the University of Louvain, M. Ladeuze, an amiable and energetic personage. In the circumstances which threatened the University, he desired to remain at his post. He had been imprisoned in the Town-Hall for twenty-four hours as a hostage. He was unable to obtain leave to hear Mass until another Professor of the University had come to take his place as hostage during his brief absence.

Speaking of Mass, I noted that at Louvain the priests were able to celebrate this rite without military escort. In the surrounding villages the priests were not allowed to put on their vestments and say Mass without a guard of three or four soldiers with fixed bayonets.

In the Red Cross ambulance I found a large number of Belgian citizens, among them several ecclesiastics, all occupied with the care of the wounded. I met there the Professor of Neo-Scholastics, Dr. Nys, Father Jansens, and one of my former fellow-students, Professor Noyons,

who later, during the sack of this unhappy town, bore himself so heroically. The wards of the Red Cross were all guarded by German soldiers. I found there, fortunately almost cured, an old man and a boy of twelve on whom soldiers had fired.

Father Jansens, ambulance attendant, had been constantly menaced by officers of the army with their revolvers. These officers doubtless imagined that nothing was to be obtained from an ecclesiastic by any means less bellicose.

The German officers declared to anyone willing to listen that the priests, from their pulpits, excited the population against the enemy. They affirmed that Cardinal Mercier, in his pastoral letters, set the example. But I have read all the utterances of that noble prelate, and I can testify that they are pastoral letters of a lofty character and refined tone, which do not contain the slightest hint of an incitement to murder.

The Professors whom I met gave me the names of priests who had been shot because the Germans found a mitrailleuse in their belfry. The Germans had never cared to listen to any explanations on this point. Yet they were easy to furnish. It is possible that the Belgian troops, retiring hastily before an enemy superior in numbers, had abandoned these mitrailleuses; but the responsibility lay on the military authorities, and not on the priests.

Moreover, the accounts given by the German military are not to be believed. In their fevered imagination every event in a village is multiplied in a vast number of villages. One could hardly speak to a military man without hearing of villages " where the *curé* had placed

a mitrailleuse in the belfry to fire on German troops," etc.

On arriving in each village, the German soldiers began by searching the church and the *curé's* cellar. Even when nothing suspicious was found, they plagued him. A *curé*, sixty-five years old, had to pump water for two hours for an entire company which wanted to slake its thirst. Another priest was, without any reason, hanged three times; after each hanging the soldiers cut the rope. The last time the soldiers, thinking him dead, left him lying on the ground. He came to, and was able to get away. He has deposed to these facts himself before the Antwerp Commission of Inquiry.

The entry of German troops into the town of Louvain passed off without great difficulties. In order that this ancient and magnificent city should not suffer from the invading army, the Belgian army had evacuated it. The superior German officers were able to proceed immediately, and without let or hindrance, to the Town-Hall. There they found the Burgomaster in his office; they surrounded him, brandishing their revolvers. One of the officers forthwith exacted 30,000 kilos of potatoes, another 32,000 kilos of bread, a third 30,000 kilos of flour. If these demands were not at once satisfied, the town was to pay 200,000 francs per day. It seems that the municipal authority of Louvain did not show the conqueror much complaisance, though this may be combined with perfect dignity, as the example of the Burgomaster of Brussels proves.

At Hasselt the Germans had confiscated 2,000,000 francs at a bank. At Louvain the authorities hastened to place all funds deposited in the banks in safety. The

Germans, consequently, found hardly anything when they entered. In revenge, they began by exacting 100,000 francs from the municipal treasury. The sum was not there. The officers diminished their demand, successively, to 80,000 francs, to 50,000 francs, to 20,000 francs, to 10,000 francs, to 3,000 francs. The treasury official added thereto 80 francs, and the Commandant signed a receipt for 3,000 francs. At the end of one day, however, the Burgomaster of Louvain, incessantly threatened that he should be shot if he did not comply with the most insignificant demands of the conquerors, and terrorized by the spectacle of all the "Brownings" levelled at him, could no longer endure such an excess of emotions—he had to take to his bed.

Several officers carried the official in charge of public works off with them in an automobile. They examined a bridge which was in its normal state. Next they announced to the unfortunate official that he would be shot if he did not immediately swear that all the bridges of Louvain were in the same state. He protested, saying that he had not inspected these bridges for several months, and that it was therefore impossible for him to swear. After a menacing play of revolvers, the unfortunate man was hustled to prison as a hostage answerable for the state in which the bridges might be found.

It would seem that the Germans, who do not lack courage when fighting, are horribly afraid of dangers in the towns where they like to think themselves in safety. They went perpetually to the hostages, who were detained in the Town-Hall, to demand provisions and money. But they were never willing, by giving them

temporary liberty, to enable them to obtain what was demanded from the inhabitants.

The hostages, among whom was M. Ladeuze, were obliged to provide their own food as best they could.

A lad brought it them. The officers of the "Kommandatur" wished one day to visit Alderman Schmitz, who was acting for the sick Burgomaster. They ordered a young lad who had just brought food to the hostages to conduct them to M. Schmitz. The officers, followed by a platoon of soldiers, were accordingly led towards the house of M. Schmitz. They rang, and asked the lad if this house was really where the Burgomaster lived. "No," replied the boy, "the Burgomaster does not live here."

Forthwith the officers shouted to the soldiers: "Shoot him! shoot him!" The soldiers were already taking aim, when the lad, who at first did not know what was the matter, had the presence of mind to say: "But this is where M. Schmitz lives, who is acting for the Burgomaster." That saved his life. The officers' terror must have been very great to betray them into so grim an absurdity.

The Germans dreaded traps everywhere. Under every bridge they crossed peacefully a quantity of dynamite might be concealed; every house might be a small fortress.

The people of Louvain were indignant at the carelessness with which the Germans wasted the supplies that had cost the city so dear. The first day they requisitioned and obtained 30,000 kilos of meat. Two days after they returned to the butchers 10,000 kilos, which had gone bad, and demanded the equivalent in fresh

meat—of course without any payment. Some days after the occupation no citizen could procure meat for himself, and even the richest had to live on tinned food. A neighbour of M. Scharpé, an artisan, who in ordinary times earned good wages, was happy to be able to feed himself and his family on dog-biscuit.

Although no serious cause for discord between the population and the garrison of the town had occurred, the Germans set about pillaging some houses, the owners of which had fled on the approach of the enemy. I visited some of them. The doors were broken in. Among the disordered furniture lay linen and other household accessories. All objects of value had disappeared. According to their custom, the pillagers before leaving had left their filth in the beds. They even penetrated inhabited houses. Before setting about pillaging the house of a Professor of the University, they locked up the Professor, an old man, and his wife.

Unlike many other notables, Professor Scharpé and his wife remained at Louvain, convinced that it was their duty to encourage their fellow-citizens by good words and by their example. At the same time, before the arrival of the Germans, they had sent six of their ten children to Ghent. The presence of the two eldest and the two youngest gave the courageous woman energy to face the terrible uncertainties of the moment.

However, the mother felt cruelly the absence of her six children, and especially the impossibility of getting news to and from them. Mechlin was still in Belgian hands. Towards noon a student at the University offered Madame Scharpé to bicycle there with a letter.

The postal service was still working between Mechlin and Flanders. She accepted the offer gratefully.

After lunch the Rue des Moutons suddenly filled. A whole company of tired and dusty soldiers occupied it. They carried their rifles ready to fire. The non-commissioned officers had their revolvers in their hands. A corporal pointed out the house of M. Scharpé as the billet for twenty-six men and a Captain. They wanted to enter the house immediately. They called for dinner and wished to sleep. They examined all the windows, and one could see that they were afraid of being fired on from other houses. We let them by a back-door into the open courtyard, which was only separated from the hall by a glass door.

Seven men were billeted on our neighbour the artisan who had only dog-biscuit to live on. It was absurd, but our street was the first by which they entered the town. They did not trouble to go any farther. They prefer to remain together in as small a number of houses as possible, so as not to be isolated in case of attack. Our neighbour of the dog-biscuits came to us to complain. We went to speak with the Captain, for it is no use to bandy words with inferiors. In the meanwhile Madame Scharpé had just called me. The twenty-six soldiers believed they were in danger in the garden, and had opened the glass door to get into the house.

Madame quickly shut the door, whereupon they began to utter threats. I addressed them:

"Gentlemen, be silent, if you please, and wait until things have been put in order. You understand that there are not twenty-six mattresses in the house."

'We don't want any," they answered; "only let us all sleep together." "All right," I replied; "but conduct yourselves properly. I will talk to the Captain."

Thereupon the corporal commanded: "Stand at ease, knapsacks on the ground, but keep your rifles in hand."

After some discussion the Captain decided that he alone and his orderly were to be received into Scharpé's house. Our neighbour of the dog-biscuits was delivered from his guests.

The Captain, like, for that matter, the majority of the German officers with whom I have spoken, was well conducted, with courteous manners.

Although he had made a very fatiguing march, he was still alert, as were also his men. Seated with us at table, he told the latest news, of which we were still ignorant: the capture of the forts of Liége and Namur, the fight at Woerth, and he gave us the latest details of the new German siege-guns of 420 millimetres, which are served only by Krupp engineers, and which drive shells some yards into reinforced concrete. He hesitated to express an opinion about the devastation of villages, and threw the responsibility of it on superiors who had ordered it.

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of two of our neighbours living in the same street; they came to complain of the soldiers billeted on them. These had had for their *déjeúner* eggs, and three glasses of beer each. Not content with that, they had demanded, revolver in hand, meat immediately, and also meat for the evening. "Where can we find this meat?" they asked. "We haven't eaten any for a week." We looked questioningly at the Captain. He made a sign

with his hand to the complainants, and said he would be with them shortly.

After his simple dinner of preserved food, he proposed that M. Scharpé and I should accompany him through the town.

He went slowly through the street. He called the soldiers imperiously, one by one, and asked them loftily, without even looking at them, if they had had enough to eat. The tone in which he pronounced the words made the soldiers understand what they were expected to reply. All without exception answered in the affirmative. To those who had complained a while ago, he said they were to give the soldiers only what they had at their disposal, and at each meal two glasses of beer. Anything further was to be paid for by the men themselves. The soldiers saluted.

In the afternoon I went to the Premonstrant monastery at Parc, half an hour from Louvain, to see the Father Superior, Dom Nols, who might, I thought, give me some interesting details. The building is a perfect type of those old and wealthy abbeys which, with their double *enceinte* of high walls, resemble châteaux. Going up the broad avenue of approach to the entry under two huge gates, one reaches a garden. Here the principal door of the monastery opens on a wide terrace, with a flight of wide steps. When I arrived it was nearly six o'clock. The Abbot had to go to the refectory immediately, and invited me to return next day. I made my way slowly back to the town. I heard the roar of cannon to the north-west of Louvain.

Immediately on getting home, Professor Scharpé informed me that serious events had happened. The

student who had gone to Mechlin on his bicycle returned by three o'clock in furious haste. Half-way between Louvain and Mechlin he had met Belgian and English (?) troops, who stopped him at the point of the bayonet, questioned him, and ordered him to go back the way he had come. I asked to speak to the Captain. The latter had been looking forward with pleasure to a bath which Professor Scharpé had offered him, but at five o'clock, on receipt of orders, he had left with his company to meet hostile troops in the direction of Mechlin.

Little by little the town heard of the approach of the Belgian and English troops, succour from whom it had expected ever since the beginning of the war. Possibly the population showed a certain joy which displeased the German soldiers.

We heard in the distance the sound of cannon and of continuous rifle-fire. During supper, about eight o'clock, the crack of the rifles came nearer, sharp and short. We were persuaded that there was skirmishing between the Belgian troops and the garrison. However, isolated discharges, which seemed to proceed from skilled marksmen choosing their mark, struck me as odd. I prepared to go outside to see, but suddenly German soldiers arrived, and began shouting to the inhabitants, who were at the windows, to retire into their houses, and on no pretext whatever to come into the street, on pain of imprisonment, or worse. The military authorities had already proclaimed a week ago that from nine o'clock in the evening to daybreak no one was to be in the streets. We saw in this notification no reason for anxiety; we only supposed that closing-time had been made earlier. We went up to the loft and placed our-

selves at a dormer-window. Far off there was a red glow. Was it caused by a fire, or was it the reflection of the lights of the town through the fog? We were satisfied as to the peaceable intentions of the populace, and could not imagine even the possibility of such a disaster as that which at this very instant was about to fall on the unhappy town. We remained quite quiet; we even made bets. To-morrow should we be talking with the garrison in German or English? I went to bed, and begged my hosts not to wake me during the night on any account whatever. The surprise would be all the greater on the morrow.

IV.

THE SACK OF LOUVAIN.

Wednesday, August 26.—At 4 a.m. in the morning M. Scharpé was already at my bedside. He said that probably a large part of the town was already on fire. During the night there had been continual firing in the streets. Fugitives entering Louvain by the Rue des Moutons reported that dead bodies were lying in the streets. The whole family had passed the night in the dark at the windows. As for me, I had heard nothing.

Professor Scharpé begged me to go into the town, as he himself was obliged to remain with his wife and children, who were in great anxiety. He commissioned me to offer the hospitality of his house to some friends in the centre of the town. He asked me to get certain provisions, and at the same time to ascertain what injury had been done by the fire. I dressed hurriedly and went off. All our quarter round the Rue des Moutons had been spared. Alone in the street, I saw pressed against the window-panes the anxious faces of the inhabitants, who had been awake all night, ready to fly the moment their lives and property seemed to be seriously menaced. I was asked for news, or was told

the worst rumours in low tones. I only replied by evasive gestures.

The neighbourhood of the Town-Hall was in flames, and also the Krakenstraat, Drieengelenbuurt, and the vegetable market. I proceeded to the house of M. Scharpé's friends. Five German soldiers stopped me. They had quite a different aspect from that of the previous days. They marched along with haggard eyes, as if drunk. They threatened me and ordered me not to stay in the street. I answered that I wished to be conducted at once to the officer on guard. From him I inquired if there was any order compelling citizens to remain in their houses after sunrise. The answer was in the negative. The Lieutenant looked at my passport, and smilingly gave me my liberty. The soldiers who had stopped me were admonished pretty severely. As I had no wish to be taken every five minutes to the guard, I asked the Lieutenant for a *laissez-passer* (permit). He said he could not furnish one, and that to obtain it I must apply personally to the Commandant of the garrison, Major von Manteuffel.

I then went to the residence of the family Persoons to offer them Professor Scharpé's hospitality. They declined it; they were busy putting their furniture in safety. The pipe of a fire-brigade pump was thrown across the building, taking on to the roof water which was falling on all sides like fine rain to protect the house. The pump was worked by German soldiers. At first I thought it strange that the Germans should try to arrest the progress of a fire which they themselves had started, but on traversing the vegetable market I saw that the pumps

were so placed as to prevent the fire spreading in the direction of the Town-Hall. In all other directions the fire continued to gain the houses of the district. Les Halles, with the ancient library of the University, were already completely destroyed. The buildings had probably been fired early in the night. One of the two adjacent houses was still untouched. If I am not mistaken, it was the house of the Spanish students of the University, superintended by Father Catala.

The walls of many of the houses were still standing, but along the roofs, which the fire began to pierce, flames were issuing with a roar. Other houses fell in with a noise like thunder. No one in the streets, save some soldiers who had been ordered to protect the Town-Hall against fire, and other soldiers wandering aimlessly about with terrified looks.*

At such moments, when chaos appears to reign, and when one sees the most precious and rarest objects, the heritage of centuries, trodden under foot, life itself seems to lose all value. Now I can understand easily how those who are placed against a wall to be shot are able to maintain a contemptuous silence, or to utter lofty

* The German newspapers and reviews have expatiated on the merit of the Commandant of Louvain, who is credited with having saved the Town-Hall from the disaster. The spread of the fire is said to have been checked in this case by blowing up the surrounding houses with dynamite. The merit of the Commandant would have been greater if he had prevented the burning of the library, from whence the fire spread in the direction of the Town-Hall. And if he did cause it to be checked in the proximity of that magnificent structure, the fact that the offices of the Kommandatur were installed in the building, and that a large part of the garrison was quartered in it, fully explains this act of magnanimity.

words of rebuke. Some soldiers tried to stop me again; angrily I flung one of them my passport (filled in in French). "Can't you read that, blockhead!" And when they threatened me with their rifles: "Take me at once to the guard; I won't bandy words with you." I looked them straight in the face. After a few threats they let me continue my way.

In a street near the vegetable-market I saw soldiers firing into a burning house. Were they trying to prevent someone from leaving the furnace?

I passed by a shop the door of which had been broken in. A soldier who was posted before the building pulled me by the arm, and showed me something in the back of the shop. It was the body of the shopkeeper in his night-clothes, with a small black hole in his forehead.

I asked: "Was it you who killed this man?"

"No, but I was with those who killed him. We will teach these pig-dogs (*Schweinehunde*) to fire on German soldiers!"

"How do you know that this was the man who fired on you?"

The soldier retorted with another question: "How do you expect us to be making long inquiries in the dark night?"

In this short answer the whole logic of reprisals by the military against civilians is summed up.

I was just about to return to the Scharpé family to tell them of their friends' refusal when I saw a flame rising from the tower of the Church of St. Peter—a collegiate church, not, as has generally been said, a cathedral. All the buildings which surrounded this

monument were intact. The church was therefore fired intentionally.*

Some frightened people signed to me to enter their house, and told me in a whisper that in the night, about two o'clock, a number of women were taken by soldiers in the direction of the Brussels gate. They named, among others, the daughter of widow Ackermans, who occupied a small house in a street off the Krakenstraat. I went there, and the trembling old woman told me that she and her daughter were taken towards the Brussels gate by some soldiers who were billeted on them. They had to walk all the time with their arms raised. They found there other women. Then the soldiers ordered her, probably because she was too old, to return home, and had kept her daughter. The same thing occurred to married women and young girls in the neighbouring streets. There could be no question of reprisals in this case, for in this street no disorder had occurred.

I went to the Brussels gate to see if I could find any trace of these women. In the Rue de Bruxelles I saw

* In the official report published by the German Commission of Inquiry it is asserted that the fire reached the collegiate church by accident. According to this report, the neighbouring houses, from which it is alleged the soldiers were fired on, must have been fired by the troops in order to punish the inhabitants. From thence the fire must have reached the church. *A priori*, it is difficult to see how the fire could have spread so easily through the thick walls of this large building. Moreover, at the moment when the flames began to issue from the little tower in the *middle of the roof* all the neighbouring houses of which the report speaks were intact. It is pretended that the pictures which were in the church were saved by German officers. This word "saved" appears to me a euphemism.

on the ground everywhere about me heaps of dead, here three, farther on one, then two, again three, and so on. As I walked along, still alone in the street, I looked behind me. The entire tower of the college church was burning; the fire was fanned by the powerful current of air which passed through the interstices of the belfry. Immediately afterwards the tower fell in, and then little flames began to issue from the roof.

I met in the streets soldiers who looked at me without speaking. People I addressed told me that, in fact, small groups of women *had* been conducted along here during the night and had not returned. Accordingly I resolved to make a complaint. While returning I met a column, and informed its officers what I had observed. They replied that they had just arrived from Aerschot, and that therefore the alleged miscreants could not belong to their company. The soldiers were beside themselves with rage at the sight of the corpses, and cried: "Pig-dogs! Pig-dogs!" They regarded me with threatening eyes. I passed on my way.

Troops were drawn up before the Town-Hall, and were being reviewed by the Commandant, surrounded by his staff. Behind the troops one heard the roaring of the flames and the crash of the beams as they fell in. The men turned their eyes towards the conflagration which was destroying the celebrated church. The admirable Town-Hall was uninjured.

I approached the Major, and asked if I might put a question to him.

"Yes." The officers fell back.

"Are you aware that during the night a large number of women were taken by soldiers outside the town?"

"No."

"Do you think it is in conformity with the honour of your army that defenceless women should be subjected to such treatment?"

The Commandant replied, raising his voice: "Do you think it is in conformity with the honour of the Belgian army to make civilians fire on our soldiers from their houses?"

I failed to see the logic of this answer. "Commandant," I said, "being the subject of a neutral State I cannot enter into this question. I simply wished to bring the circumstance to your notice, leaving you to take action or not."

"You mean to say that these women have been outraged?"

"I do not say that, Major."

"If you want to complain, apply to the guard "(composed of a sergeant-major and some soldiers).

"I have no wish to complain, Major; I only desire to give you the information, and I am convinced I have applied to the proper authority."

"I have no time to attend to all this, but "—raising his voice—"I thank you for your communication."

We saluted each other in great style, and the conversation closed.

On the way home I saw that in the Rue de la Station also a large number of houses had been burnt. At the vegetable market I perceived behind a half-open door an old woman among a group of other frightened women. She signed to me to approach. She asked if I would cross the market-place to bring her provisions from her shop. As her instructions did not seem to me very

clear, I took her by the arm, and we went slowly towards her shop among the soldiers in quite a gallant attitude. She gathered together quickly some of her belongings. I recollected my commission, and offered to buy from her some eggs for the Scharpé family. She answered: "The eggs cost me twelve centimes" (a little more than a penny); "well, I can let you have them for fourteen centimes." And so she did. Afterwards I laughed heartily at her presence of mind (for she trembled like a leaf) and at her real good-nature, for in the whole of her life she had probably never asked for so small a profit on her goods.

In the long Rue des Moutons no one was to be seen in the street, but on every side heads were put out of window to ask me for news. At the Scharpé's, neighbours arrived every moment to ask advice. M. Scharpé decided to go himself to the Town-Hall to speak with the Commandant about the measures necessary for the security of his street. If the worst came to the worst, he proposed to offer himself as hostage for the good conduct of the people of his district. If he should be kept prisoner, I was to do what was necessary to restrain the population in its fits of terror, and to give it advice. We posted sentries in couples, who, seated every hundred yards on stools in the street, one opposite the other, would see that no one loitered, and would put down disobedience by force. Doors were to be shut, and no one was to appear at the windows. We selected strong young men, capable of acting as well as talking.

Our measures were not superfluous. After the anguish of last night a reaction was felt by the populace, and now that it saw that everything remained calm in our

quarter large crowds formed near our house, in particular before the Cour des Béguines, from whence issued hordes of poor people. The men at once began to talk loudly, and the chatter of women and children was only interrupted from time to time by distant rifle-shots. I became uneasy, and by dint of arguments and many threats I succeeded in getting all these people back into the Cour des Béguines.

The prolonged absence of M. Scharpé began to alarm his wife. I went to look for him at the Kommandatur. The guard who recognized me after my conversation with the Major before the troops, answered that I could wait for him. I took my place among the guard standing on one of the steps of the broad stone staircase which led to the main door. We did not speak, however.

The men of the guard, thirty at least, were seated on the steps, or stood below against the walls. Above, a tall and rather elegant Lieutenant, seated on a chair talked with his men. The subjects of conversation were the incidents of the past week. To a question put by one of his men, the officer answered in a distinct voice: "Hitherto we have only burned *villages*—Tongres, for instance—and well done, too! It has been razed to the ground. Now we are beginning on the *towns!* Louvain will be the first to be destroyed."

I was shocked by these malicious words, but pretended to hear nothing. After a quarter of an hour I insisted on being admitted to the Major. In the corridor leading to his office I found my friend. We were admitted together, and we informed the Major of the measures we had taken to insure order in our quarter. The Major,

a man of about fifty, after directing the preparation of a passport which would enable me to move about freely in the district he commanded, talked to us politely. He kept repeating: " Why did they fire on us ? You see the result. Just look—now the Cathedral has been burned." We made no reply. He promised not to send even patrols into our quarter if we could guarantee that the measures we had taken would be carried out.

M. Scharpé left before me. Presently he returned in a state of nervous irritation. When leaving, he had taken a Lieutenant who was in his way gently by the arm, asking him to let him pass. The officer shook him off roughly, and insulted M. Scharpé by saying, among other things, " that the Commandant was much too kind to us two." Major von Manteuffel came out with my friend to obtain satisfaction, not, however, without remarking that M. Scharpé made " protection against the young officers " difficult. I had the impression that the latter rejoiced at the calamity which had befallen the town much more than the Major. Perhaps he was only obeying superior orders ?

From the moment we returned we noticed that the people's courage had increased. Several men replied rudely when we urged them to go back to their houses. These were chiefly Flemish. But when suddenly the horn of a military automobile was heard, or even when some military cyclists armed with rifles appeared, all were seized with panic, and fled at full speed. In such cases soldiers are more likely to fire on the fugitives than on those who keep calm. The morning was well advanced when I made ready to pay my visit to the Premonstrant Monastery at Parc. I had gone about a

hundred yards when an unusual sound made me turn instinctively. Behind me a German soldier was taking aim. I made frantic signals with my arms. He approached, searched me, not forgetting to look even under my hat, and told me he would have killed me if he had found me carrying any kind of weapon. He had called after me, but, owing to the wind, I had not heard him.

The Monastery at Parc was full of refugees. The brethren told me they had been present at the fire throughout the night. At two o'clock they noticed a recrudescence of the flames; brilliant sparks flew up in an immense column of fire. It was the incunabulæ, the precious "Livres d'heures," the rare manuscripts of the early Middle Ages, just discovered, which were burning. Thus the Monastery knew before the town that the incomparable library, the glory and pride of numerous generations, was lost for ever.*

I began to talk to Dom Nols, but he knew nothing of me except from my letter of introduction. After the terrible disaster of which he had been a witness, though from a distance, he had become a little suspicious, and the basis of confidence on which a conversation such as I desired should repose was undermined. I took leave of the Father Superior with a smile, expressing the hope that

* In several periodicals it has been suggested that the Germans at Louvain wished simply to rob the Library. The supposition seems to me to be ill-founded. The Library was set on fire at one or two o'clock in the morning. The garrison was in a state of disorder, and a prey to the gravest anxiety, expecting an attack from the Belgians. It is incredible that they should have proposed to carry off a library of more than 300,000 volumes within four hours! Anyone who has the least idea of what a University library like that of Louvain is will understand my scepticism.

we might meet in happier times which would justify greater confidence.

At one in the afternoon the military authority, summoning the population by the beating of drums, had the following proclamation made in the streets:

" All arms must be deposited immediately at the Town-Hall. If, during the perquisitions which the authorities will cause to be made later in the day, one weapon should be found in any house whatever, the entire street will be punished most severely. All doors must remain open day and night. Also all shutters (*volets*) must remain open at night. All rooms on the ground-floor must be lighted, so that patrols can see into the houses at any moment. The civil guard, disarmed on the approach of the enemy, as in several Belgian towns, are to present themselves at two o'clock at the Town-Hall in civilian dress."

At the hour named the civil guard duly presented itself. Their numbers were checked by means of lists found in the offices of the municipality. Later in the evening the military authority caused all the young men to be summoned, even those who belonged neither to the army nor to the police. One young married man who lived close to us had just told us, with tears, that he had received an order to present himself at the Town-Hall. Next day, during the morning, these civil guards and young citizens were conducted to the station and sent off to Germany as prisoners of war—a thing, by the way, contrary to international law.

M. Scharpé and I visited all the houses in our quarter to ascertain if those who occupied them thoroughly understood the orders of the authorities. Many citizens

were absent. The levity of the Germans in calling attention to proclamations of such gravity was extraordinary. On the other hand, the carelessness of the inhabitants was extreme. At the house of the widow of a French officer I found her husband's revolver. I took care to bury it in the garden. The moral atmosphere of the street had become insupportable. Weeping women poured in from every side. They surrounded M. Scharpé, who lavished comfort and advice.

In the course of the afternoon I saw two Belgian cavalrymen dash full-speed into the town and turn off immediately in the direction of Mechlin. Soon after an entire company of Germans left the town and occupied the railway-line. I went to have a look: all the men were posted in the gutters. The cannon was being fired close to us.

As soon as evening arrived, M. Scharpé and I made a tour of the quarter to see that the population was obeying the police orders issued that day. Many families had left the town after lighting a candle in their drawing-rooms, without, however, leaving the door open. But a house which was not opened to a patrol after summons was liable to be broken in, and probably burnt after being pillaged. Thus the whole street would be in danger. We therefore knocked everywhere where doors were closed, and where the door was not open, we had it unfastened by a locksmith, whom we took with us.

The gasworks had stopped working, and we were face to face with another difficulty—that of procuring candles for everyone for the night. In a street in the centre of the town I got the help of three young ladies, Mlles. Neve and Mommens, who, for the sake of their

own homes, helped to break the locks of neighbouring abandoned houses. One of these ladies, no less valiant than charming, hatchet in hand, placed a ladder against the wall near the open window of a first story, to obtain admittance to the house and open it from within.*

When I returned to M. Scharpé's, night had already fallen. An enormous glare rose over the town. In the Rue de la Station houses were burning, one after the other. The fire was fed by the soldiers, whose outlines I saw in sharp relief against the flames.† In our quarter there was not a single fire. We could, therefore, go to bed with the hope that the poor people round us, and we ourselves, would escape the terrible fate which so many of the citizens had suffered.

Thursday, August 27.—In the night shots were heard afar off. The clouds seemed to burn like an immense brazier.

* If Belgian civilians were sometimes guilty of imprudent acts, the fault, as far as the Flemish districts are concerned, lies with the Germans, who did not warn the civil population, and with the authorities, who did not explain the proclamations. The first notices posted up in the village streets were written in German and French. I have even picked up a notification on red paper containing the well-known threats against persons in the vicinity of whose dwellings telegraph-wires are cut, in German, French, and *Russian*. Let them pretend now that these precautions were not taken before the war! I still recall the astonishment of an officer whom I informed that the peasants did not understand French. Moreover, as I have said, the working people needed an explanation even of documents written in Flemish.

† At Louvain, as elsewhere, a special apparatus, carried by some of the non-commissioned officers, was used to set fire to the houses. This apparatus consisted of incendiary grenades, petrol-sprinklers, benzine in nickelled cans, cakes of cotton-nitrate, and of petrol-dregs.

Not a patrol had passed through our street, and no house had been set on fire there. There was nothing to suggest that the nightmare of these last days would continue. The population was visibly regaining courage. However, from daybreak M. Scharpé's hall was filled with people belonging to all classes of society, who considered us their Providence, and confided their fears to us.

M. Scharpé betook himself to the Town-Hall to confer with the Major-Commandant. A quarter of an hour after, as on the previous day, I got ready to go and see if he was not being kept prisoner. At this moment the mistress of a large orphan school in the Cour des Béguines came to consult us. She proposed to ask the Commandant to mark on his map the spot where the school stood, so that it might be spared should disaster occur. She was a vigorous young woman, who, she said, " felt herself a real soldier." However great her courage, though, she gladly accepted my protection.

We went together to the Town-Hall. The streets were full of ruins. We heard continually, here and there, the cracking of beams and the crash of falling walls. From time to time we passed little groups of fugitives.

The previous evening the garrison had committed some more murders. I will only cite one. In the Café Sody some soldiers were waiting for the supper they had ordered. The proprietor and his two daughters were getting it ready in silence. All at once the soldiers were summoned by a soldier who came in to go to the Town-Hall. They were already rather drunk, and, angry at the loss of their meal, killed M. Sody in cold

blood. One of the two daughters tried to run away, but the moment she opened the door which gave on to the courtyard she fell, struck by a ball in the back. The other daughter was more lucky. She had crept under a table, and the soldiers did not notice her. These occurrences did not astonish me. The character of the German soldier changes when he is excited, and he becomes capable of the worst offences.

At the Town-Hall we were told to wait on the stone staircase. Soldiers streamed in from all sides, laden with huge packages of stolen property—clothes, boxes of cigars, bottles of wine, etc. Many of these men were drunk, and played the fool. The guard was hugely tickled by their antics. The Oberleutnant, laughing, signed to them to pass along quickly.

Some Louvainers hurried by. While they were still some way off, the soldiers signed to them to raise their arms. Accordingly, we saw the notabilities of Louvain, citizens whose sense of personal dignity was almost proverbial, walking for hundreds of yards in a humiliating posture. This sight moved me more even than the fires.

As soon as we entered, M. Scharpé, pale and anxious, took me aside. He begged me to return to his house and to take down into the cellar all his pictures and other valuables. Things were growing worse. The town was doomed.

Entering the Rue des Moutons, I took, at the request of my companion, a roundabout way by the Rue de la Station, where the fires excited her curiosity. Suddenly a troop of soldiers, staggering as they marched, approached, vociferating. An aristocratic and haughty

German on horseback stopped them, and appeared to be putting questions to them and giving orders. After this conversation, the soldiers came towards us and tried to drive us towards the railway-station. "Quick! be off!" they cried; "the town is to be bombarded." Their air was so threatening that my schoolmistress, uttering a hoarse cry, fled in the direction of the station. I took the opposite direction, to carry out the request of M. Scharpé.

Germans told me that the bombardment was to commence at noon, and that the town must be evacuated before that hour. Some nuns, alarmed, but still quite self-possessed, were making for their convents without undue haste. In the Rue de Namur I was accosted by the Professor of History at the University, Canon Cauchie, to whom I had formerly been introduced. He begged me to accompany him and Mgr. Ladeuze to Brussels. I promised to rejoin these two venerable gentlemen at the house of the Rector.

Indescribable confusion reigned in the Rue des Moutons. Pale as death, the orphans were marching in an irregular troop. On a wheelbarrow, pushed by a little old man, lay a nonogenarian nun. The crowd showed immense terror and a wildness that boded ill.

The Germans ordered the whole population to go towards the station. The majority did just the contrary, and fled in the direction of Mechlin and Brussels. All, men and women alike, who took the road indicated to them by the Germans were to be imprisoned and transported to Germany. While I helped M. Scharpé to carry his most precious treasures to the cellar, the Professor told me he had vainly besought the Com-

mandant to spare our quarter, where nothing reprehensible had occurred. Major von Manteuffel flatly refused. The whole town was to pay for the pretended misdeeds committed by some of the citizens. We hurried with our task. Pale, yet self-possessed, her baby in her arms, Madame Scharpé, who, with her small, energetic face and clear eyes, seemed to have stepped out of a picture by Memling, gave orders and directed the packing. A young Flemish woman, driven from a neighbouring village, helped her courageously. Soon the whole family started on foot towards Mechlin and Antwerp, with a barrow loaded with some valises and a small supply of food. Henceforth it was merely a few atoms in the whirlwind of misery rolling towards the Dutch frontier.

V.

CAUSES OF THE SACK OF LOUVAIN.

THE Germans assert that inhabitants fired on them on the evening of August 25. They explain, accordingly, their conduct at Louvain as a simple application of their abominable theory which renders whole communities responsible for alleged violence committed by one of their number.

The Belgians say, on the contrary, that no inhabitant of Louvain fired on the troops. The Germans, according to them, sought a trivial pretext to be able, without the shadow of excuse, to carry out a coldly premeditated project.

I have often discussed this question with German officers, and particularly with Doctors of Law mobilized in their army.

They have had to admit that in all these affairs none of the rules necessary for the constitution of judicial proof were observed. Even in officers who might have wished to proceed in regular fashion against the accused, the precepts of the supreme German Staff soon weakened the sense of justice. Why long interrogatories, which mean considerable loss of precious time, when the accused is guilty, inasmuch as he is an inhabitant of a

commune all of whose members are responsible for the misdeeds committed by one of their number?

At Louvain houses were fired into indiscriminately. Citizens were seized on all hands, and, without even seeking any proof of their guilt, private soldiers shot them in their homes. The soldiers themselves have told me so. I need not reproduce all their conversations. I need only certify that their poor intelligences were able to draw the unavoidable logical conclusions from the German theory, newly invented, as to responsibility in time of war. This theory gives them in advance entire absolution for all the injustice, no matter how cruel, they may commit. The enormous value of the simplest German warrior is such that if a soldier is killed in a town, the town is accursed, and all its inhabitants lose their right to live.

Let us now examine the probability of the German assertions, allowing at the outset that, taking into account the partiality of belligerents, it is impossible to offer conclusive proofs in favour of one or the other. I can, consequently, only state presumptions.

Well, then, impartial witnesses are unanimous in their explanations of the panics which so promptly occurred among the German garrisons in Belgium.

I saw, on the Place Saint-Josse-ten-Noode at Brussels, a German soldier bound for twenty-four hours to a transport-waggon, his hands tied behind his back. The people, gathering from all sides, showed pity for this poor devil, who, humiliated before the conquered, alternately shrieked with rage and silently shed hot tears. His crime, a German non-commissioned officer

explained to me, was having caused a *panic* in the garrison by aimlessly firing his rifle. At Louvain I saw, in the courtyard of the Town-Hall, a soldier bound to the wheel of a waggon because he had fired a shot during the night, and thus provoked a *panic* in the garrison, some of the soldiers of which also began to fire. This man made no complaint; his punishment was not public. I have already told how at Aerschot the imprudence of a soldier caused a nocturnal *panic*. Again, at Louvain, at the barber's who shaved me daily, two soldiers amused themselves by firing at the ceiling; the bed of a child, on the first floor, was pierced by a bullet, which, fortunately, did not touch the infant. Immediately soldiers ran up from all sides. A large number of German officers complained that the nervousness of their troops was such that the firing of a shot was always followed by a fusillade—a result facilitated by the ease with which the German rifle is loaded.

As a result of an interrogatory of German prisoners of war in France, it is established that among a column which passed through the town of Louvain after the first day of disaster a panic occurred because of a rifle-shot which rang out. The rumour immediately spread that a soldier had been killed by a civilian. Forthwith the troops began firing into the houses. Enormous excitement and great disorder prevailed for some time, until it was discovered that no soldier had been wounded. Suppose that in this tumult a soldier had been killed by his brothers-in-arms seized with excessive nervousness, a new legend would then have been added to the others!

It seems that during the evening of August 25 a similar panic seized the garrison of Louvain. The reader must remember that during the afternoon of that day the Belgian Army was approaching the town. A part of the garrison started out to meet it; the rest of the garrison, awaiting reinforcements, which arrived in the course of the night, certainly spent hours of anxiety. At nightfall the troops, which had started some hours previously, returned to the town. A large number of witnesses declare that those who remained in the city mistook their identity and fired on their brothers-in-arms. It is quite possible that during these skirmishes the returning troops imagined they were being attacked by civilians, and this is all the more probable as the garrison showed little zeal in enlightening them.

So far one may admit the good faith of the soldiers. Now, however, comes in the German military theory as to reprisals in time of war. If the troops attacked by alleged civilians cannot distinguish their actual assailants, why, then, so much the worse for the others! The whole community is responsible. This doctrine, adopted by University professors, has been promulgated by German Generals in proclamations affixed to all the walls. Thus the devastation of Louvain is nothing but the logical consequence of a dangerous juridical paradox which is taught seriously nowhere in the world but in Germany. And the soldiers who entered houses and in their fury killed men in the presence of their wives and children, without proof and without question—these malefactors are guilty of nothing but a breach of discipline

During the days preceding the disaster I was able to see that the people nourished no designs of vengeance. I spoke with professors, shopkeepers, people generally, and I found among them, if not a spirit of perfect submission caused by the executions at Aerschot, Linden, Haelen, etc., at least a pronounced intention to await quietly the expected victory of the Allies. The persons to whom I spoke had confidence in me, and for that matter, they showed it by the communications they made me.

One piece of evidence of special gravity confirmed my conclusions. Two leading men of Louvain, who are worthy of entire confidence, told me that on the morning of August 26, while walking in the garden of one of them (Rue de Namur), they heard close to them a fusillade that lasted twenty minutes. Mounting a ladder, they saw, behind the wall which ran round the garden, two German soldiers, hidden among trees, firing into the street—if I am not mistaken, the Rue des Moutons. Their shots appeared to proceed from the houses, and the soldiers who passed by must have thought that the inhabitants were firing at them.

The same evening I saw in the street, at the place where the soldiers had fired, the corpses of two horses still saddled. Most of the fugitives who left the town next day must have noticed these. Later, at Brussels, an officer told me that at Louvain two officers on horseback had been killed by civilians, and that this was why the authorities decided to burn the town.

When it began to burn, the Germans observed in the population a state of feeling which alarmed them. It

has been thought that the chief object of the Germans in burning Louvain was to warn the people of Brussels that a similar fate awaited them in case of rebellion. This supposition is, perhaps, confirmed by the threat made at Creil and Senlis by German officers: "We will burn Senlis to the ground to warn the Parisians." And certainly at Senlis there was no motive for bombarding the Cathedral and burning two or three streets.

The hypotheses I put forward are confirmed by the fact that the Germans themselves are not agreed as to the causes of the disaster. Three days after the sack of Louvain an officer of the Chief Staff at Brussels told me that, according to their reports, a brother of the Burgomaster had killed an officer of high rank at Louvain. Another officer of the same Staff told me that the victim was killed by the son of the Burgomaster. Now the Burgomaster of Louvain never had a brother, and his only son, when the disaster occurred, had been dead ten years. Probably we have hereby an instance of legend-building. The case of Aerschot—where, the Germans say, the Commandant was killed by the son of the Burgomaster, but where he was more probably killed by a shot fired by the excited and disorderly soldiery—has been combined with another, and the two have crystallized in the fevered imagination of the armies.

During these days of terror I have, while living among the troops, noted how a slight suspicion may in a few hours change into certainty. There are circumstances in which reason must be extremely strong to resist the force of passion. Prudent reason can only suggest

probabilities. The agitated mind prefers the false images which arouse fear, hate, or hope. The observer should first share all the cares and all the hopes of the masses, but while observing them with a clear eye and a feeling heart he should be on his guard, and should only draw conclusions in a spirit of equity after calm reasoning.

VI.

THE EXODUS FROM LOUVAIN.

WHEN, faithful to my appointment, I arrived at the house of the Rector of the University, I found him and Canon Cauchie waiting for me, and ready to start. They had kept on their soutanes. As it was only ten o'clock, and the bombardment was not to begin until noon, I proposed to them to take the opportunity of hiding their papers and most precious documents in the cellar. But they had no faith in the word of the Germans, and wished to set off at once. Mgr. Ladeuze's aged female servant joined us, carrying a loaf of bread, a huge ham, and a little fat dog.

We soon arrived on the Tervueren road, amidst an enormous stream of fugitives. A professor of the University was flying in his dressing-gown, and collarless. Human beings uncannily old were jolted along in poor hand-carts. Farther on young women recently confined were being carried, pale and in danger of death. At the exit of the town we met a guard of four soldiers with a non-commissioned officer. They insulted the fugitives—"You beggars, pig-dogs"—levelled their revolvers at them, and cried: "Hands up, everyone!" Nuns and children, professors and peasants, all put down their bundles to obey. I waved my passport, and showed, without lifting them, my empty hands.

The German troops passed through the crowd of fugitives, dividing it into two streams on either side of the road. The priests in particular were insulted by the soldiers, who cried incessantly: "Down with Catholicism! Death to priests! All priests should be shot!" We suffered other forms of molestation, not, however, very dangerous. A soldier quitted the ranks, snatched a heavy bundle from a woman, and flung it on the shoulders of Professor Cauchie. As I accompanied two priests in soutanes, I was taken for a priest in disguise: "Death to you too—you in the straw hat!" A few moments later a huge bundle came down on my poor hat. Farther on six German soldiers, more compassionate than the rest, placed themselves on each side of the road with buckets filled with water, and, as they had drinking goblets, offered it to the women and children. No one stopped to accept their help; the only thought was to get away as soon as possible.

A little later, on the same Tervueren road, Mlles. Neve and Mommens were waiting for us, and recognized me as their helper of the day before. Mgr. Ladeuze introduced me, and I complimented them on their courage.

The road passed through a magnificent country. For the first time, in all these painful days, while I dragged, laden and weary, along the endless road, I noticed the beauty of these fertile plains, which spread out like splendid carpets. M. Cauchie and I got ahead of the others. My companion was a vigorous old gentleman, with the gait of a young man. His mind had remained very alert, very amiable. His face reminded me of that of Ampère. He enjoys a great reputation among

Belgian savants. He has worked out several of his historical theses while walking over this rich country. Both under the impression of the scenery, we walked side by side, at times instinctively stepping aside under the trees to get out of the way of mounted officers. We discussed topics far removed from the horrors from which we were flying. Has Christianity given the world novelties of which there is no trace in antiquity? Did not Ozanam fail, in his celebrated "Apologies," to appreciate the great moral and religious beauties of the Greeks and Romans? Does the decision relating to the *Comma Johanneum* compromise the infallibility of the Pope? These problems followed one another in our conversation, while the soldiers shouted cries of hate and contempt after us, and the wretched crowd of fugitives pressed on its way.

We turned off from the road to insure the safety of the housekeeper with her ham and little dog, which she hugged closely in her arms. In the fields of corn and buckwheat, which had in no way suffered, we felt almost gay. The farewells of the housekeeper were very touching. She feared for the future, and begged the two admirable old gentlemen to give her their blessing. They made the sign of the cross and murmured the Latin formula. The old lady, who shed abundant tears, next begged Mgr. Ladeuze to bestow a last caress on her little dog. The prelate, who was good-nature itself, granted her request. I felt that the true mission of the priest is to comprehend, not the forms, but the essence of the things of this life. The trifling little gesture of the priest indicated the compassion he felt for the poor woman, to whom the affection shown to her dog was a

precious consolation. As to the dog, he seemed quite unmoved by the incident.

Our intention was to take the tramway that runs to Brussels at Tervueren. As we struck off across the fields, we approached the village. At the first houses we were stopped by a German post of ten men commanded by a sergeant-major. After examining my passport, they let me go, but they detained the two ecclesiastics. Their papers were not even glanced at. In spite of my strong protestations, some soldiers led them away behind a fence. The sergeant-major alleged the orders of an Oberleutnant. I begged, then demanded, to speak to this officer, but the non-commissioned officer refused this. It was no use showing all the papers I had on me and appealing to my rights, real or imaginary; I did not succeed. I went to the spot where I had seen the two priests disappear, and behind the fence I saw twenty-five priests spread over a meadow, guarded by eight soldiers and a corporal, who was addressing them insultingly. I asked the Germans what were the reasons of this strange captivity. They answered vaguely: " The priests have incited the people to fire on us," etc. Absurd accusation !

I insisted again on being taken to the Oberleutnant. The corporal told off a soldier to accompany me. The sergeant-major whom I spoke to a while ago came running up as fast as his legs could carry him, and severely scolded the corporal for having granted my request. I got the impression that this harshness arose from the arbitrary decisions of a troop of fanatical Protestant soldiers, the same who had misconducted themselves at Louvain. Possibly these directions may

have been, not indeed given, but tolerated, by an isolated officer. I had no doubt, therefore, that I had only to address myself to the first Captain who came along to obtain the immediate liberation of my two companions and their fellow-priests.

Lying on the grass, the priests submitted without replying to a rain of insults. Some prayed and told their beads. I called to my two companions that I would do my utmost to bring their case before a superior officer, who would put an end to this scandal. I therefore pursued my road towards Tervueren, and at last, close to the tramway-shed, found a tall bearded Major, in conversation with a young Lieutenant. I introduced myself to them, and told them that my two companions, who were two of the leading scientists of Belgium, had been imprisoned at Tervueren for no apparent reason, and I felt no doubt that this unjustifiable proceeding would be reprimanded the moment the authorities become aware of it. "You forget, monsieur," exclaimed the Major, "that at Liége and Aerschot two of the foremost strategists of Germany were treacherously murdered." I inquired if there were any presumption as to the complicity of my two priests in the murder. "No," replied the Major; "but the Belgian priests have excited the people from the pulpit." I attempted to show that nothing of the kind could be charged against my two friends. The Major politely decided to accompany me, and we returned together to the first guard. The Major called for explanations. The soldiers were very angry when they saw me return. The account of the sergeant-major was broken by interruptions and irrelevant observations. He told how compromising

papers had just been found on a priest, and spoke of notices describing the Germans as barbarians, and urging the population to shoot them as if they were dogs. The Oberleutnant had had him shot immediately, and had given orders to seize all priests coming from Louvain, and to make them accompany the troops as hostages while they were crossing Belgium. I looked at the Major. He reflected for a moment, and then replied: "I uphold the order, the priests must remain prisoners." I saw that for the moment there was nothing more to be done.

He talked for a long time to me about what he called the stupid attitude of the Belgians. "These fools," he said, "might have done very good business with us if they had been willing to let us pass. We would have paid all the cost of provisions, etc., required for our passage and our stay. We would have given them even more. Just see now what they have made of their country! What enormous losses! You will see by-and-by that there will be very little of the country left if they continue to resist us." I answered that their honour would be left to them, and that the Belgians appeared to me to be a small nation who thought a great deal of their honour. Besides, we Dutch would have done the same. He shrugged his shoulders, and said that the sense of honour is of great importance for private individuals, but not for peoples. "Moreover," he continued, "do they suppose that these little pin-pricks they inflict on us do much harm to a great army?"

I asked permission to go and tell my companions why they had been captured, since they had not the least

notion themselves. The Major assented, and offered his apologies for being obliged to maintain the arrest.

In the meadow the soldiers at first would not let me speak to the prisoners in French, but a German student in the ranks promised to note what I said. The soldiers interrupted me continually. "At Louvain violent sermons were preached in the churches against the Germans, priests fired with Brownings on the troops," etc. Hearing these accusations, the priests contented themselves with shaking their heads in denial, whereupon the soldiers burst into sarcastic laughter. Mgr. Ladeuze begged me to make an appeal at Brussels to the Duc d'Aremberg, a personal friend of the Kaiser's, and sometime Curator of the University of Louvain. The corporal sent one of his men to the Major to acquaint him with this new request. I was very sceptical as to the result of the step. One of the soldiers, a former student at the University of Liége, questioned me. "What relations had I with these priests, and how did all this concern me? The Emperor would never permit the liberation of these accursed priests when once he knew how many of his men had been assassinated," etc. I replied: "We shall see." After taking leave of my companions and saluting the other prisoners, I started for Brussels in a train crowded with fugitives.

VII.

GERMAN TROOPS AND THE PRIESTS OF LOUVAIN IN THE FIELD OF TERVUEREN.

I WAS the more eager to intervene in favour of my travelling companions as the meadow in which they were herded had just been the scene of the execution of a priest, and anything was to be feared from the soldiers in their then frame of mind.

While I was talking with the Major we were told that a priest carrying compromising papers had been shot. I determined to find out all I could about the occurrence. This is what I learnt from eye-witnesses whose evidence I was able to test.

Among the inhabitants of Louvain who were flying towards Brussels, only those who wore the ecclesiastical habit were arrested. The guard of Tervueren first apprehended some thirty priests, among whom were Mgr. de Becker, Principal of the American College of Louvain, and Mgr. Willemson, late Rector of the same College, since appointed to Rome, but temporarily at Louvain, and several Jesuit Fathers. Their pockets and valises were searched. Nothing suspicious was found except on one of the younger Jesuits, Père Dupierreux, a little notebook, bearing the following note in French:

"When formerly I read that the Huns under Attila had devastated towns, and that the Arabs had burnt the Library of Alexandria, I smiled. Now that I have seen with my own eyes the hordes of to-day, burning churches and the celebrated Library of Louvain, I smile no longer."

This Jesuit-Father had a praiseworthy habit of noting his impressions in this manner. But to have this reproachful reflection in one's pocket in war-time was an imprudence for which the poor priest was made to pay in tragic fashion.

Before the assembled troops, the thirty priests were drawn up in a semicircle round the unfortunate Jesuit. The note was first read in French, and then translated into German. The priest who was reading it was interrupted by the exclamations of the soldiers. The Lieutenant announced that incitement to murder being proved, the Father would be shot at once. He was allowed to confess. After confession, his eyes were bound.

The priests were told to wheel round. The firing-party advanced. The order was given, and the shots rang out. The other priests were made to watch the death agony of the unhappy man. When he was dead, they were ordered to bury him on the spot.

After that, the Lieutenant read the following proclamation:

"In the name of the Emperor, I arrest you as hostages, to be conveyed with our column across Belgium. If a single shot is fired by the population on our troops, you will all be killed."

The clergy were then hoisted on to open vans and

sent to Brussels. They arrived there in the evening. The sight of them caused a sensation. Mgr. de Becker, having recognized one of his relations, called out to her to go as quickly as possible to the American Legation to tell them what had happened. The next day M. de Becker and several of his companions were released, as the result of steps taken by the Spanish and American Embassies, and by two very influential Jesuits, the Father Superior and the Rector of the Brussels Residency. When the first groups of priests arrested at Tervueren had been sent to Brussels, the guards who had seized them continued to detain all the clergy in cassocks who passed. In this way they had taken about twenty-five more, when, as I have said, they separated me from Mgr. Ladeuze and from Canon Cauchie.

Not far off another guard had been doing the same thing. They made up a third band of prisoners, among whom were Mgr. van Couwenberg, the Vice-Rector of the University, and Father Vermeersch, Rector of the Jesuits of Louvain. This group was carried off in a westerly direction by a German column.

The Germans have tried to excuse these arrests on the strength of the compromising little notebook they had found on Father Dupierreux. They have failed signally. Thirty hours before they knew of the existence of the unfortunate Dupierreux they had already shamefully ill-treated two Spanish priests—Father Catala, Rector of the College for Spanish students, and another, whose name I have forgotten. They were living near the Library when it was set on fire, and were escaping in the street when they were taken prisoners, with about forty other people. They passed

the night under arrest at the station, and the next morning were taken away with a company going west. In vain the two Spaniards showed their papers; the officers would pay no attention. Blows with the butt-end of muskets were rained on their backs. Then, at midday, the officers told them they were to be shot. They were given time to confess to each other, their eyes were bound, and they were placed against a wall. While the two priests were saying their prayers, rifle-shots rang out. The platoon had fired into the air. The soldiers burst into a laugh. The two old priests escaped with a fright. A little farther on the Germans met some Belgian troops. In the skirmish that ensued all the prisoners escaped, and made their way by side-roads to Brussels.

From all these facts may we not conclude that from the beginning of the sack of Louvain a special order had been given against the priests? The three groups arrested at Tervueren were not the only ones. In other directions as well prisoners had been taken. In all, about ninety priests at least were seized. Some days later many of these poor creatures were seen with companies on the march. No one can say what has become of them.

VIII.

THE HUNT FOR THE PRISONER-PRIESTS.

When I got to Brussels, I went at once to the Rector of the Free University, meaning to propose that he should intercede with the military Governor of the capital on behalf of his colleague of the Louvain Catholic University and Professor Cauchie.

I did not find him at home. A doubt crossed my mind. Under the circumstances, perhaps a humble subject of a neutral State might obtain more than some civil authority in a conquered town, who was probably on bad terms with his conquerors. I went into the Nord Station and accosted a Lieutenant, a Doctor of Laws, one Lincke, a reserve-officer.

He advised me to go at once to the Staff of the Commandant of Brussels. He had no doubt that I should obtain the liberation, not of all the priests, but certainly that of the two Professors, as soon as it was known that they were distinguished scholars.

During our conversation five or six reserve-officers, who had just passed through the town of Louvain, arrived at the station. Dr. Lincke introduced me to them. They told us that Louvain had not been bombarded, but while they were still there the garrison was methodically setting fire to entire quarters of the town.

"It's a disgrace!" they declared. I was of the same opinion. Thereupon they drew my attention very courteously to the fact that one must be an officer to be able to understand the necessity of such measures in similar circumstances.

I went to the Foreign Office, where the German Government of Brussels had established itself. All the surrounding streets were guarded by sentinels. In front of the entrance to the palace two machine-guns were threateningly placed. Neither the Governor-General, von Luttwitz, nor his Staff was present. A Feldwebel took note of my request, and asked me to return the next day at nine o'clock (German time; all the clocks of the town had been put forward one hour since the entry of the Germans).

Friday, August 28.—The next morning, at eight o'clock by Belgian time, I found myself at the Kommandatur.

The General's Adjutant had been informed of my visit by the Feldwebel. The arguments which I put before him were the following:

The priests had been arrested on the assumption that they had used their influence to incite a quiet population to murder, when it was anxious to be on friendly terms with the Germans.

I contested the justice of these suspicions. They might *at most* mistrust ecclesiastics who were popular preachers or confessors coming into regular contact with the inhabitants. But the learned occupations of Mgr. Ladeuze and of Canon Cauchie gave them no opportunities for intercourse with the people. I insisted on my ability to bring forward evidence which would prove their complete innocence. The Adjutant assured

me that he had read the report of events in Louvain, and that in that town a superior officer had been killed at the head of his troops by a shot fired by the Burgomaster's brother. I asked him if the fact were official. He said "Yes," and left me to transmit my request to the Staff.

After waiting for half an hour in the salon, the Chief of the Staff came in, Major Herwarten von Pittenfeld, a friendly and courteous gentleman, who offered me a choice of all the European languages for our conversation.* I repeated my arguments to him. He went away to deliberate with his colleagues, and came back to tell me: "It is very difficult for us to interfere without knowing all the facts. Your accusation is lacking in precision. We will, however, give you a permit to search the neighbourhood of Brussels, and find out where these arrested ecclesiastics are at present. Come back here when you know, and then we will decide."

Readers will remember that the German regiments were crossing Belgium according to the orders given by the Generals in command. During this advance they enjoy partial autonomy. The Government of Brussels is not in constant touch with the columns, and can only reach them easily at the moment when they pass the guard-houses which are in telephonic communication with the Government. When I made my complaint the Governor was still unaware of the arrest of the priests in question. To permit my going to look for them Major von Herwarter modified the pass that had been given

* He began by some remarks on the sack of Louvain. According to him, the officer killed at the head of his troops was the victim of the Burgomaster's son. I asked if this was official, and he declared that it was.

me at Louvain. It now held good for the whole of Belgium. I explained to the Major that even in this form the pass could not be of any use, since every column commander to whom I might put questions, as to the hostages he had brought with him and to what had happened to them, would send me about my business. We should lose time, and the exasperated troops might commit cruelties. Embarrassed by these reflections, the Major decided to introduce me to the Governor.

While I crossed the apartment, occupied by the office of the Staff, I heard the officers complaining that " these Jesuits " had been received while military affairs had been made to wait.

In fact, I found the Father-Superior of the Belgium Jesuits and the Rector of the Jesuits at Brussels closeted with the General. The Governor, a fine man, with the distinguished air of a consummate diplomatist, was listening to their complaints. The Father-Superior, a priest with a fine cameo-like profile, gently explained in skilfully chosen terms the distress of the Confraternity at the premature death of Father Dupierreux, who, according to him, was absolutely innocent. I felt obliged to interrupt him for a minute. I thought it better to concede at once that the officer who had the unfortunate ecclesiastic shot had a shadow of a pretext in the form of the note which was found. The Governor had promised an inquiry; if the victim were not proved as innocent as his Superiors believed, reparation might be delayed, a counter-inquiry prescribed, and thus precious time would be lost for the other prisoners, who were threatened by a similar fate. I explained then to the Governor that the note found on Father Dupierreux

constituted the only pretext for his execution. The Governor declared that this was very unlikely, and repeated that the inquiry would clear up everything. The two Jesuit Fathers, who had only come to complain of the fate inflicted on their young Brother, went away, begging me after my interview to give them full details of what had passed. I explained my intervention on behalf of the two Professors. They had been my travelling companions, and my evidence could not be suspected of partiality, since I was neither Catholic nor Belgian. It was a question, in this case, of scholars of great reputation who never occupied a pulpit, and who lived as private citizens. Consequently their arrest for an alleged incitement of the populace to murder was without any foundation. The Governor replied that under these circumstances there was no objection to their release, and that I might go and announce it to them.

I thanked him, and asked him to give me the necessary authorizations. Was it likely that on my simple word the Commandant would be willing to liberate the two priests? The Governor promised me a written order. I ventured to make some further observations. The troops showed a strong aversion to all wearers of a cassock. To proceed. Had the arrests already affected been carried out with sufficient prudence? Would not the responsibility for certain arbitrary arrests come back to the Governor?

And I concluded thus: "If Your Excellency would liberate all priests against whom no proof of guilt exists, it would be evident that the responsibility for these arrests lies with subaltern officers, since they are dis-

approved by Headquarters. If Your Excellency cannot decide to effect this liberation, the responsibility for them will certainly fall on the Government."

The Governor listened with courtesy, and at once ordered someone to telephone to the different guard-houses of the neighbourhood for information. His Aide-de-Camp soon brought him the replies. "Nowhere was there any trace of these priests." The Governor asked me if I was disposed to go in quest of these prisoners; he put a motor-car at my disposal, and an Aide-de-Camp who would inform the regiments of the General's decision. Of course I accepted these proposals. The Chief of the Staff was present during this interview.

In the anteroom the two Jesuits were waiting to ask me for news of Louvain and the two Professors. We began to talk. While he was waiting the Aide-de-Camp was called in to the Governor. When he came back he told me he had received secret orders.

This Aide-de-Camp of General von Luttwitz was Lieutenant Wickel, of the Emperor Francis of Austria's Hussars, a smart young officer who had been wounded at Charleroi, and after his recovery had been attached to the Military Governor. He was delighted to get out into the fresh air. The Government Staff has to work very hard, and has not even time to dine comfortably. At 11.30 we started together, after having passed three and a half hours in the Kommandatur. We went first of all to the Midi Station to see if the priests had been sent in a military train to Germany. I can't think of our motor without a certain shudder—a little racing-car of 100 horse-power taken from the Belgians. Of the

four seats the two back ones were unprotected. Its speed of 145 kilometres an hour was not a maximum, but on roads that have not been specially made for racing it was fairly good.

At the Midi Station no priests had been seen. As the morning was now well advanced, we began by lunching heartily at an hotel; afterwards we left Brussels. Lieutenant Wickel assured me that our military chauffeur was the best in the whole Division. However that may be, certain turns in the road inspired me with feelings very short of admiration for the chauffeur's skill. Even in the Boulevard Jammar people looked after us, first with surprise, then with anxiety, and that was only the beginning of things. No sooner were we out of the town than our chauffeur set off at lightning speed; the motor took leaps that brought the tears into our eyes. My neighbour was sometimes obliged to hold his grey fur cape together. I told my companion that the Governor, in liberating the two Professors and in disapproving of the conduct of the subalterns, had acted with justice, and had shown great political prudence. "You will be still more pleased," he replied, "when you know the contents of the secret orders with which the General has entrusted me." Where could the missing priests be? We had no idea. I suggested beginning our search at Tervueren, which the columns left yesterday. At Tervueren we were told by some soldiers that at least three groups of priests had been taken away. We made our way to the Kommandatur of the little town, established two kilometres off in the Town-Hall. I stayed behind in the road while the Lieutenant had himself announced to the Major. Soon he came out,

accompanied by an old officer, Colonel von der Goltz, in a blue uniform with frogs. If I am not mistaken, he is a nephew of the famous Field-Marshal.

The two officers conversing together directed their steps toward the barracks. I followed them at a certain distance. The Lieutenant handed the Colonel a letter from the General. This inspired me with greater hope for the other priests. The Colonel approached some officers seated in a little café near the barracks. He transmitted this new order to them, and then entered the barracks, where I now hoped to find my priests imprisoned.

Among the officers who formed a group in the café, excitedly discussing the new case, I recognized the Major who had yesterday accompanied me to the guard-house of Tervueren. I saluted him courteously. He stared at me, without returning my salute. I awaited the return of the Aide-de-Camp patiently in the middle of the square. A young officer detached himself from the group and went towards the village. He walked straight up to me as if to knock me over, and I only avoided a collision by taking a step to the right, without appearing to notice him, when he was almost upon me. It would have been foolish of me, under the circumstances, to engage in a dispute which would have forced me to challenge the young man. Besides, in war-time German officers are forbidden to fight duels. I should have injured the cause of the prisoners if, in a fit of temper, I had been guilty of an imprudent action. The officers who were watching us would have taken advantage of my error.

At last a great number of priests, escorted by some

soldiers, issued from the barracks. We greeted each other, and they called to me that the two Professors would follow them in a short time. The ecclesiastics were led towards Brussels, where they were to be set at liberty. A few minutes after Mgr. Ladeuze and Canon Cauchie appeared, accompanied by Lieutenant Wickel, who, as he chose to express it, " gave them back to me." Touched and grateful, the two scholars took note of his name and thanked him warmly. They were to go themselves and ask for a passport to Brussels, but if the Kommandatur of Tervueren should make any difficulties, they could apply to him, and he would procure one for them. They first went to the Kommandatur, thence to the Major's, where they were made to wait a quarter of an hour in the road. When at last they returned, we entered a neighbouring café and asked for a room in which to take a light meal. The proprietor's five daughters, having witnessed these scenes, and the shameful treatment inflicted on the prisoner-priests, conducted us, weeping with emotion, to the first floor. As soon as we were left alone the Professors embraced, with tears in their eyes. They had spent a terrible day.

I have already told how, at the request of Mgr. Ladeuze, I had insisted to their guard that a soldier should be sent to the Major to inform him that the Rector of the University appealed to the Duc d'Aremberg for himself and his companions in misfortune. The corporal had laughingly complied with my request. After my departure, the soldier had brought back the answer from the Major that he had nothing to do with this Duke, and that he refused to transmit the request.

Some time after an officer had come to say to my two companions: "In the name of the Emperor, I arrest you as hostages. You will be taken through Belgium by our troops, and if a civilian fires on us, you will be shot." The two priests were then led into a barn adjoining the barracks. They were ordered to lie down on the ground. Rifles were levelled at them, and a thundering voice called out: "If you move, you will be shot. If you utter a single word, you will be shot." The two old men spent the night side by side without daring to utter a word. It seemed to them that their last hour had come. When relating these occurrences, Professor Cauchie said to me: "At twenty I renounced the pleasures of life; at thirty I renounced its riches; and yesterday evening I renounced life itself, and made an act of contrition."

During the meal our spirits revived, and whilst conversing with courtesy and good humour, the two old scholars rejoiced to see a ray of sunshine light up the crimson wine-glasses with which they tremulously touched mine.

I took leave of them, and while waiting for the officer, I was surrounded by the five girls, and made the object of great manifestations of affection. But the pleasantest moments are short-lived. The motor was ready, and the amiable officer of the grey fur cape was getting in. I kissed the girls' hands, and they waved good-bye after me. We continued our journey at a rate of 145 kilometres an hour. First we made for Diechen, there to seek the third group of priests, among whom was Mgr. van Couwenberg and the Rev. Father Vermeersch, a clever administrator. They were not to be found.

After having transmitted an order to the Major, we preferred, before pursuing fruitless inquiries, to return to Brussels to the Kommandatur, asking by telephone on every side if the column in charge of the prisoners had been seen. The desired reply reached us from the guard-house of Ruysbroeck—the column was there. The priests, who were marching at the head, were immediately released by order.

IX.

AT BRUSSELS.

THE attitude of the population in the capital had changed during the first days of the invasion. The terrible rumours which preceded the German troops had intimidated the Bruxellois. Two days later the sight of the Germans had almost become a pastime. The citizens watched their musters with curiosity, admired their horses and the martial order which reigned in their ranks. In a short time, by a phenomenon of which I have already spoken, the population plucked up courage again, and its pride revived. In proportion as the Germans settled down in their new surroundings and tried to approach the inhabitants, the latter drew back, and pretended to ignore them. They had almost admired them as enemies, but the idea of friendship with them excited disgust.

A thousand disagreeable little incidents happened to the invaders. No one would speak to them in the cafés The officers seated round the tables in the Palace Hotel formed a club, as in Strasburg. But they almost seemed to wish to efface themselves. It was easy to see that they feared to have their self-satisaction dis turbed They tried to amuse themselves as at home. But the names of women accessible to their

advances were noted, and their photographs were crowned with invectives. Several of these lights of love were treated by the gossips of the quarter in a manner reminiscent of a well-known scene in "Au Bonheur des Dames."

The Germans interpreted the mocking, hostile attitude of the inhabitants as a symptom of impending rebellion. On my arrival at the Nord Station, I noticed several mounted machine-guns surrounded by a strong guard on the Place Rogier. I went to claim a large trunk left there on my arrival. I found it broken and emptied, like all the others. The Germans had been "looking for dynamite"! Lieutenant Lincke, who was in command of the station, complained bitterly of the attitude adopted by the people of Brussels. For several days past troops had been held in readiness in the station, equipped and armed. The citizens would not even stand aside on the pavement when the soldiers passed! The latter complained that in the road they were obliged to put up with ironical looks and malignant speeches from the crowd. "When and where," he exclaimed, "has it ever been known that a victorious army on entering the enemy's town has been satisfied with so wretched a fate? This town was forced to surrender. We were free to extort money from it, and we have done nothing of the sort. You see how my soldiers have to spend their nights on the ground and in railway-trucks. The civilians have assumed an unseemly attitude towards us, and do not appear to appreciate the kindness we have shown them. Consequently, we have given orders to our soldiers never to swerve from a straight line in the streets. They are to strike those who make fun of

them, knock down anyone who does not stand aside, and arrest those who will not submit."*

On Saturday, August 29, I called at the Kommandatur with the two Professors, who wished to thank the Governor for their liberation, and to ask him for passports to go to Holland. After the painful time they had been through, they desired to find the calm and peace they loved in a friendly country. General Baron von Luttwitz expressed his regrets for the destruction of the treasures of Louvain. "It is a misfortune. Each side mistrusts the other. Any appearance of hostility in action calls forth reprisals. Hatred increases in violence, and excesses are committed. Fear becomes mixed with hatred, and vengeance is taken, not only for what has been endured, but also for what has to be feared. Thus the most regrettable incidents ensue."

Mgr. Ladeuze submitted to his inspection a plan for sparing the remains of Louvain University as much as possible. The troops might be quartered in the college halls instead of in the laboratories, where collections of precious instruments were in danger of being

* I questioned him as to the procedure adopted by officers quartered in Belgian towns towards the inhabitants. "You, a jurisconsult," I said, "know better than I that your army will commit terrible injustices, directly legal guarantees are no longer to be relied upon." The Lieutenant, an intelligent and refined man, replied: "You are quite right. It is impossible to set aside regular forms of procedure without making the execution of justice a matter of mere chance. But Germany, forced to undertake a war she never desired, and threatened by enemies on every side, has no choice in the matter. She is obliged to sweep this land with a besom of iron" (*diese Länder mit eisernem Besen zu fegen*).

damaged by men ignorant of their value. The General approved the plan, and suggested writing to the officer in command at Louvain, requesting him to spare the buildings mentioned in an enclosed list, and to take the necessary measures for protecting the collections. He promised to send this request to Major von Manteuffel, and to support it with his own authority. "If it is in your power," continued the General, "do your utmost to calm the population of Brussels. I fear that disturbances are threatening. We are in a state of war. I know that the population hopes for an occupation by the French at a near date. There is no question of such a thing. Our armies are approaching Paris. The French will never come to Brussels. I am bent upon remaining on good terms with the population. But if a rebellion breaks out, I must take harsh measures. I have cannon enough outside the town, and I have power and authority to raze Brussels to the ground. However, I will ask you to point out the University buildings, so that they may be spared in the bombardment."

Mgr. Ladeuze answered that he was insufficiently informed concerning the dependencies of the Free University. But he pointed out the Institut Saint Louis, at the corner of the Boulevard Botanique and the Rue des Marais. The Governor marked this house in red pencil on the map of the town, on which other buildings had already been indicated in the same manner. We asked for our passports for a journey to Holland viâ Aix-la-Chapelle, whereupon the General took down our names and addresses, and promised to let us know as soon as a good opportunity should occur.

As regards the bombardment of Brussels, I may add that General von Luttwitz had received his authorization by telegraph from Berlin on his intimation of the Mayor's refusal to pay a ransom of 200 million francs. When the Kommandatur informed M. Max of the consequences of this refusal, he merely replied: "Kindly give me three hours' notice of the bombardment, so that I may evacuate the town!"

After the visit to the Governor, we made our way to the magnificent Town-Hall, to interview the Mayor, M. Max. He received us in his study. He is a man of small stature, but proud and distinguished bearing. Innate dignity lends manly grace to his easy flow of words. His exceptional merit is shown by his power of finding the right attitude and words for inspiring the invaders with respect and esteem. His quick gestures and brilliant eloquence must have strangely subdued the German officers sometimes. On their entry into Brussels one of them tried on him the line of action which had succeeded so well in small towns. He broke into his study, revolver in hand. While he shouted and stamped about, M. Max, neither listening nor looking at him, rang for the porter, and ordered him to show this mannerless intruder to the door, and to request the Governor to choose another emissary more worthy of his task. The officer was forced to apologize to M. Max.

The Mayor of Brussels modestly attributes the deference of the German Government towards him to the circumstance of his being representative for the moment of an entire province. He told us that only that morning he had been able to obtain the liberation of the municipal guards of Tervueren, taken prisoner by the

officers who had my companions so harshly treated. That morning, again, he had protested against a serious and terrible violation of national rights committed by the Germans near Mons. The authority of M. Max and the witnesses he produced allowed of no doubts on the subject. In a sortie on the English troops, the Germans occupying Mons forced the Mayor and a large number of women and children collected in the suburbs to precede them. At the first rifle-shots several women tried to escape. They were killed from behind by the Germans, probably as "deserters"! It was the first time we three had ever heard such a tale. We were indignant. Since then, however, we have grown accustomed to such occurrences.

M. Max remained night and day in the Town-Hall, little disturbed by the Germans. He exasperated them by his presence of mind, but never gave occasion for violence. His dignity subdued them strangely. "Look," he said to us, "how the Belgian flag floats gloriously over the Town-Hall and the Cathedral. Much has been lost in Belgium, but not honour."

The Mayor appeared to us enveloped in an atmosphere of goodness and glory. And as we passed through the building where formerly the treaty insuring the inviolable neutrality of the little country of the Belgians was solemnly signed; as we cast a farewell look on the superb grey façade in which the gilded statuettes are set like precious stones, it seemed as if the splendour of the edifice was singularly enhanced by the moral beauty of such a man as M. Max.

When the Germans entered Brussels, they desired, as far as possible, to live in peace with the inhabitants. In

a town whose streets were full of vigorous young men, not showing themselves over well disposed towards the army of occupation, it was in the interests of Germany to treat the population with a certain degree of gentleness, or, at least, not to precipitate events unduly. Then, again, the legations of neutral countries were established for the most part in the capital, and their members might prove ocular witnesses of a disagreeable kind.

Besides this, the Germans were pleased to be in quiet quarters and to sit round the tables of the great cafés, where they affected to converse and to drink to each other, with as much assurance, though with less disdain, than at Strasburg or at Bonn. I have always been under the impression that the officers, as well as the men, were charmed by the urbanity and the gay humour of the Bruxellois. I am even convinced that they would hesitate a great deal longer to destroy some sparkling café on the great boulevards, with its atrocious rococo gildings, where frail damsels ply well-dressed clients with drink, than they would to set fire to one of those delicious little churches in France or in Belgium, where simple peasants seek consolations purely spiritual.

The Germans existed in a state of complete miscomprehension. All the officers to whom I spoke expressed their astonishment at the attitude of the population. They attributed it to a want of respect with which the Belgians were afflicted, and to their ignorance of recent events. They would not believe that their redoubtable strength and their victories could never win outraged hearts, and that all these poor people, abandoned to their enemies, could still cherish hope for the future.

By means of menaces and terrible exhibitions, the recital of which made the Bruxellois tremble with indignation, they obtained silence, but not submission. The awful pictures of burnt towns which the Germans continually held before their eyes prompted them to prudence, but did not change their opinions in any wise.

The behaviour of Burgomaster Max filled them with admiration. The military Governor of Brussels, General von Luttwitz, moreover, is a prudent man, and did not appear to me to be imbued with those ferocious ideas which the strategists of Germany are pleased to profess. The Belgian flag still floated from the Cathedral and the Town-Hall. The houses were for the most part beflagged. This indulgence was certainly due to the determination of the Government to maintain order in the town, with the collaboration of M. Max. The latter made his own terms, and thus we are confronted with the extraordinary spectacle of a conquered town in which, by means of placards on the walls, the former authorities hold discussions with the conquerors, and adjure the populace by word of mouth to submit to the yoke only in the hope of final liberation. We must therefore admit that the military Governor, up to the present, has behaved in a far more dignified manner than his colleagues in other towns, and that he, as well as his General Staff, have adopted, in certain circumstances, a calm and benevolent attitude towards the subjects of the conquered State.

On Saturday afternoon, during the lunch which the Director of the Institut de St. Louis had the kindness to offer me, I had the pleasure of meeting, amongst a number of learned priests, Mgr. de Becker, the Rector of

the American College at Louvain. He confirmed all that we already knew with regard to the death of R. P. Dupierreux, of which he was a witness. Besides this, he also asserted that General von Luttwitz made the same proposals to him which he addressed to us. Informed by the latter that he had the power and the authority to bombard Brussels, Mgr. de Becker replied: " I do not doubt, General, your power to raze our capital to the ground. You have, however, probably overlooked an important factor—the opinion of the civilized world, whose eyes are now turned upon you." We are all under the impression that the Governor of Brussels is not a man to carry out his threats lightly, and that these latter emanate from his superiors.

During the afternoon of the same day I met two Professors of the University of Louvain, who were visiting the town. They noticed that the garrison was completely disorganized. In front of the Town-Hall the soldiers were drinking alcohol copiously in the presence of their superior officers. Close to the guard stood casks of gin and bottles of wine. Half-drunk, the soldiers sat and conversed with the light women of Louvain, who have been especially patronized by the garrison in the midst of all the disasters. These girls had their fingers loaded with splendid rings, taken from the jewellers' shops, which were abandoned by their owners when the bombardment was announced. The pillage of houses continues to be carried on systematically. The town is crowded. Fugitives from Aerschot, Louvain, and from all the villages of the countryside pour into the capital. The situation will soon become untenable.

I visited a great Belgian poet, V. d. W. He told me

of a remarkable incident. A German officer, whose visiting cards only bore the name "Stein," was quartered on him His attitude towards his hosts was one of extreme courtesy. He evidently belonged to a great family, for his comrades, even those of the highest rank, saluted him with marked respect. After having shared the family life of his hosts for some days, he grew more expansive. He complained of the excesses of the soldiers belonging to his company. Near Haelen, he said, he had been forced to have a soldier shot. Fingers covered with rings had been found in this man's knapsack. When the man was questioned, he admitted that he had cut them from German corpses.

This avowal may be compared with a story told me by a German officer. In the same district the bodies of German soldiers had been found with their fingers cut off. The Captain who commanded the company at once ordered that all the inhabitants of the village should be shot and their houses burned down. One cannot contemplate without horror all the injustice to which the German theory of responsibility may have given rise.

After waiting some days, we three had still received no papers from the military authorities. The two Professors, besides, had lost all desire to make a journey through Germany, where they might be taken prisoners. The Government refused to issue passports for a direct journey into Holland; it was necessary to go viâ Aix-la Chapelle.

On the other hand, they enjoyed a certain protection by reason of the presence at Brussels of the Nuncio and of the American and Spanish Ambassadors. Moreover,

under the patronage of the German Governor, a committee, of which they were appointed members, has been constituted, to re-establish ordinary social life in the ruins of Louvain, and to save the few University buildings which have survived the disasters of the war.

At length the General Staff gave me an opportunity of going to Aix-la-Chapelle in a motor-car. I made the journey in the company of two Germans. We did not converse; the sad spectacle of the villages through which we passed did not inspire us with a desire to exchange views. Nearly the half of Louvain is burnt down. Soldiers, who seemed to be the worse for drink, wandered about the ruins. Round the railway-station not a house is standing. Nobody is to be seen, with the exception of a few people who have returned to save that part of their furniture which the soldiers have left, and then flee from the place.

After Liége, the aspect of things was worse. Some villages have disappeared completely. The German troops had not only set fire to the houses, but had subsequently demolished the walls. These enormous heaps of stones, which no longer possess shape or form, create the impression of the work of some demoniacal agency.

At Aix-la-Chapelle one of my travelling companions, who had come to Belgium to bury his brother, killed on the field of battle, left us. The other went with me to Herzogenrath, with the intention of crossing the Dutch frontier. In the hotel where we put up our papers were examined. Mine were in order, but those of my companion appeared to arouse suspicion. I came in for a share of this because I had accompanied him.

We were taken to the military station, and exam-

ined by a senior Lieutenant. I requested this officer to telegraph to Brussels, but he refused. When I declared my intention of lodging a formal complaint at the Dutch Embassy, he set me at liberty, with many apologies.

All night long a sentinel was on guard in front of the hotel. At daybreak I noticed that my luggage had disappeared. I was forced to go to the military station again. It was simply a question of vengeance on the part of the officer whose merit I had not sufficiently appreciated the night before. I requested him to be good enough to advise the Government at Brussels as to the form in which passports should be drawn up, so as to spare travellers annoyance at small frontier garrisons.

He gave me no answer, but kept me waiting some time. When he had restored me to liberty, I asked him whether he had found any dynamite in my trunks. He demanded in a threatening voice: "Have you any dynamite, then?" And I replied, amidst the sniggerings of the soldiers: "Of course, Lieutenant, I am in the habit of carrying half a pound of dynamite about with me."

My companion had not yet been liberated. In his fear and anger he let out that he was a German spy. A Greek by birth, he was travelling in France in the service of Germany. The passport which was given to him at Brussels bore the seal of the Secret Service which was installed in a small cabinet at the Kommandatur. This seal is slightly different from that of the General Staff. The Greek, who did not appear to me to be particularly adroit, poured out complaints with regard to the precious time he was losing. His object

was evidently to go and exercise his honourable calling in Holland or in England.

Just as I was leaving Herzogenrath to go to Holland, the spy began to struggle violently with the German Lieutenants, who refused to recognize his identity, and thus damaged the prospects of his magnificent mission. He also understood that I should not fail to report him to the Dutch authorities.

The sight of the little footpath, which leads to the first station in Limburg, and which is carefully guarded by troops, filled me with joy. Our territory, inviolate, notwithstanding the malicious calumnies of some Frenchmen and Belgians, was dearer to me than ever. I hope that the independent spirit which has characterized the Dutch through the centuries, and which certain influences in our country have attempted to weaken, will be able to distinguish the true interests of Holland in the political chaos.

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