

HUMAN LIFE PAID AS GRAIN OF DUST

Civilians Not So Highly Prized by Military Element, Says Writer in Belgium.

AIR IS CHARGED WITH WAR

All Aliens Are Suspected by Germans of Being Spies, American Newspaper Men, Themselves, Becoming Merc Prisoners.

BY CHARLES N. WHEELER. (Staff Correspondent of the Chicago Tribune. Published by arrangement with the Tribune.)

LONDON, Jan. 12.—The human element is almost entirely eliminated from the Belgian war zone. Life and death, every impulse, it seems, is measured on the basis of military necessity and military expedience.

This soon was made plain to me after Thompson and I reached the Belgian frontier town of Rosendaal. A single human life counts for as much as a grain of dust picked up from the earth. The civilian counts less—if he gets in the way.

Churches, with the host on their consecrated altars, and even the effigies of Christ himself are smashed and splintered and blown to atoms with equal accuracy, as we shall see as we proceed.

They simply got in the way and the expedient method was to send an exploding shell crashing through them and crumble them to earth. Not alone soldiers, but men, women and children, who happened to get in the path of these death-charged projectiles, were blown to fragments.

Noncombatants' Lives Are Pawns. The human blood that is drenching Europe does not all flow from the mutilated shapes clothed in service uniforms.

It was but an imaginary line drawn through the little town and out into the garden patches that separated one from another. On one side of the barrier the Dutch frontier guards strolled lazily along, smoking and having their little quips with the heavy-framed landsturm, whose mail boots made a great noise on the cobblestones and the board platforms. They and the Prussians wore the long Winter military coats and warm caps, and muskets were thrown over their shoulders.

There was a great bustle of soldiers, among whom were several officers, as the train stopped. We were shot in through the Dutch end of the station, past the customs office, and out the Belgian or German end. We had no sooner taken the one step over the thin line between humanity and inhumanity, between security and jeopardy, than we began to feel the thing called war. The air seemed to be charged with it.

All Aliens Are Suspected. The German soldier, in the presence of his superior officers, is not a kindly intentioned being at all. He is metamorphosed into a machine, an automaton obeying the rules of the Prussian war book with the precision that a lathe responds to the cog gearing in a machine shop.

Suspicion of all aliens is the thing that obsesses his very soul. He glowers and growls and presents a fierce attitude. He is pleased when one is afraid of him. Even his voice drops into a sepulchral growl.

We got through the customs room and out on the German side, strolled down the platform, and reached two good seats in the first coach. Every soldier riveted two cold, blue eyes on us. There was a stir among a knot of officers. They came together, gazed at us, talked in low voices for a few moments, and separated.

Presently, as we were filling our pipes and expressing our great relief at escaping Prussian militarism, one of the officers stopped at our carriage. He knew just one English word—"passport"—with the accent on the first syllable.

We presented two perfectly good American passports signed by his excellency, William Jennings Bryan.

He mentioned the name of the "Fair Go" up on the "Carpet." He mentioned the name of Thompson to get out and follow him. They disappeared through one of the far doors. In about two minutes there was a loud thump on the door of our apartment and I heard the same officers making signs at me. I was escorted to the same door and invited to enter.

"I won't stand for this," he shouted. "This is an outrage, an outrage, I tell you! You guys got no right to do this. Why," and down came the walking stick with a thump on the table. "Do you know whom you are looking at? I'll tell you, Thompson—Donald C. Thompson—who has seen more war than any man in this country. Thompson is my name. There it is—right there!" and he pointed to his cognomen on the passport.

"This is a mistake," he continued, with another whack of the table. "Say, I won't do much to you wise guys when I see General von der Goitz."

The officer, recovering from his surprise at the outbreak from one so small in stature, simply laughed and remarked aside, "Grossstun." He waved his hand. "English," he growled, his face clouding in an instant.

"No, no, not English," yelled Thompson. "Americano!"

A guard stood at attention between Thompson and the officer, and the next moment the jayhawker was being rudely escorted out the door.

The officer glanced at my passport and smiled. He was one of the very few officers I encountered throughout Belgium who could not speak English fluently. Apparently he knew little or nothing of the language, for he did not take the trouble to read a special letter from Mr. Bryan to Minister Whitlock at Brussels. He folded the credentials all up together, passed them over to a soldier, and dismissed the whole case with a wise chuckle of depreciation of all that I had to say.

Reporters Are Prisoners of Kaiser. Of course, we were under arrest. Thompson and I were guarded by two landsturm on the journey to Antwerp. One had a bright red beard with a mustache that curved up almost to his eyebrows. He looked for all the world like a Japanese man. He had a squint in one eye, and I could not always tell whether he was scowling at me or Thompson. His wouldn't have smiled for \$1,000,000.

The other was a pleasant looking chap for a German soldier. He was cold and noncommunicative at first, but we managed to draw him out a little during the two-hour journey with our sign language and a few German sentences that I had remembered from the school days. But the scowl-ey, red-bearded gent—he was a bundle of icicles. And just to make things pleasant now and then he would put a fresh supply of cartridges in his rifle or let the stock fall with a thud.

BRITISH SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS WHO REPLIES TO GERMAN CHANCELLOR.



SIR EDWARD GREY.

GREY ACCUSES FOE

"Wreck of Hopes" Declared Result of Frustrated Plan.

BELGIUM IN REAL PERIL

Foreign Secretary Retorts Truth Was Told in First Statements by Von Bethmann-Hollweg and Herr Von Jagow.

(Continued From First Page.)

"This fact alone was enough to justify any communications between Belgium and the other powers on the footing that there would be no violation of Belgium's neutrality, unless it was previously violated by another power. On no other footing did Belgium ever have any such communications.

In spite of these facts, the German Chancellor speaks of Belgium as having thereby "abandoned and forfeited" her neutrality, and he implies that he would not have spoken of the German invasion as a "wrong" had he then known of the conversations of 1906 and 1911.

Cardinal Mercier Quoted. "It would seem to follow that according to Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg's code wrong becomes right if the party which is to be the subject of the wrong foresees the possibility and makes preparations to resist it.

"Those who are content with older and more generally accepted standards are likely to agree rather with what Cardinal Mercier said in his pastoral letter: 'Belgium was bound in honor to defend her own independence. She had the right to do so, and she was bound to respect and to protect her neutrality. Germany violated her oath. England kept hers. These are the facts.'

"In the second part of the German Chancellor's thesis, namely, that Germany 'took her responsibilities toward the neutral states seriously,' he is nothing but a liar. He spoke frankly of the wrong committed by Germany in invading Belgium.

Assent Given by France. "That a man knows the right while doing wrong is not usually accepted as proof of his serious conscientiousness. The real nature of the German view of her 'responsibilities toward the neutral states' may, however, be learned on authority which cannot be disputed by reference to the English white paper.

"The responsibilities were in truth taken seriously when Germany was asked to respect the neutrality of Belgium if it were respected by France, did Germany refuse? France, when asked the corresponding question at the same time, agreed. This would have guaranteed Germany from all danger of attack through Belgium.

The reason of Germany's refusal was given by Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg's colleague (the German Foreign Secretary, Herr von Jagow). It may be paraphrased in the well-known gloss upon Shakespeare: 'Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just, but four times he that gets his blow in front.'

Truth Spoken in Beginning. "They had to advance into France," said Herr von Jagow, "by the quickest and surest way so as to be able to get well ahead with their operations and endeavor to strike some decisive blow as early as possible."

"Germany's real attitude toward Belgium was frankly given by the German Foreign Secretary to the British Ambassador and the German Chancellor in his speech to the Reichstag, in which he committed a wrong in virtue of the military necessity of backing his way through—the treaty which forbade the wrong was by comparison a mere scrap of paper."

The truth was spoken in these first statements by the two German ministers. All the apologies and arguments which have since been forthcoming are afterthoughts, to excuse and explain away a flagrant wrong. Moreover, all the attacks upon Great Britain in regard to this matter and all talk about 'responsibilities towards neutral states' come badly from the man who on July 23 asked Great Britain to enter into a bargain to concede the violation of the neutrality of Belgium.

Germany Makes Pledge for Peace. "The German Chancellor spoke to the American correspondent of his efforts for years to bring about an understanding between England and Germany, an understanding, he added, which would have absolutely guaranteed the peace of Europe."

"He omitted to mention what Mr. Asquith made public in his speech at Cardiff, that Germany required as the price of an understanding an unconditional pledge of England's neutrality. "The British government were ready to bind themselves not to be parties to any aggression against Germany. They were not prepared to pledge their neutrality in case of aggression by Germany."

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"An Anglo-German understanding on the latter terms would not have meant an absolute guarantee for the peace of Europe, but it would have meant an absolutely free hand for Germany, so far as England was concerned, for Germany to break the peace of Europe."

Shipwreck of Hopes Explained. "The Chancellor says that in his conversation with the British Ambassador in August last he 'may have been a bit excited at seeing the hopes and work of the whole period of his Chancellorship going for naught.' Considering that at the date of the conversation, August 4, Germany had already made war on France, the natural conclusion is that the shipwreck of the Chancellor's hopes consisted not in a European war, but in the fact that England had not agreed to stand out of it."

"The sincerity of the German Chancellor's professions to the American correspondent may be brought to a simple test, the application of which is more opposite because it serves to recall one of the leading facts which produced the present war. Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg refused the proposal which England put forward, and in which France, Italy and Russia concurred, for a conference at which the dispute would have been settled on fair and honorable terms without war, if he really wished to work with England for peace, why did he not accept that proposal? He must have known after the Balkan conference in London that England could be trusted to play fair. Herr von Jagow had given testimony in the Reichstag to England's good faith in these negotiations.

Conference Proposed by Grey. "The proposal for the second conference between the powers was made by Sir Edward Grey, with the same straightforward desire for peace as in 1911 and 1912. The German Chancellor rejected this means of averting the war. He who does not will the means must not complain if the conclusion is drawn that he did not will the end."

"The second part of the interview with an American newspaper correspondent consists of a discourse upon the ethics of the war. The things which Germany has done in Belgium and France have been placed on record by those who have suffered from them and who know them at first hand. After this it does not lie with the German Chancellor to read to the other belligerents a lecture upon the conduct of the war."

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