

The Slaughter of the Innocents

"Three and a half million children call to the heart and resources of America for these daily supplies, not available in their own countries, that are vital to their survival and to the rebuilding of their physical well-being."

"Our resources will be exhausted in January. We must not step aside and permit the spectre of death, in the form of hunger and cold to haunt these helpless ones this winter, yet we can not continue without help . . ."

"This is a charge on the American heart, and America can not fail in her solicitude for these little ones. Twenty-three million dollars must be raised without delay, and remembering the new heart you put into the Commission for Relief in Belgium in the dark hours of 1916, I come to you again."

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

From a letter to The Literary Digest

In immediate response the following editorial was published in The Literary Digest of Oct. 30th:

WHEN JESUS CHRIST CAME UPON the earth, nearly two thousand years ago, to save all mankind, his mere coming seemed to interfere with the material interests of a few people of that period, notably King Herod, who promptly decided to dispose of this "interloper," and sent forth his soldiers with orders to slay all the children of two years old and under. Thus was consummated the most atrocious crime against innocent childhood ever committed up to that time. It has come down to us through all the ages in song and story and master painters have pictured it on marvelous canvases.

Today passing in review, as we look out through the windows of our comfortable homes in this great and happy land, are three and a half millions of helpless children, the innocent victims of the greatest war that has ever afflicted humanity. It matters not, as we gaze in the direction of these children, that our eyes must stretch across three thousand miles of ocean, we still can see them and we still can hear them, if we wish to do so; and we can not help hearing the tragic appeal in their voices and seeing their tiny arms stretched out to us, and their searching eyes looking into our souls, as they say, "Help us, or we perish." And if we fail to listen to this great call of three and a half millions of God's helpless children; if we close our eyes and ears to this great demand of duty, we shall be just as guilty of the "slaughter of the innocents" as was Herod, nearly two thousand years ago.

In these lands, swept by death and filled with tragedies too deep for tears, a sum of human suffering is being written greater perhaps than for all ages gone by. The mind grows numb and the heart sick from a constant recital of tales of such tragedy as it is difficult to believe the twentieth century could hold.

And so, when we received a letter from Mr. Hoover telling us that America must not allow death in the form of hunger and cold to come to these 3,500,000 helpless children our soul was stirred and the hot blood surged up in our heart. We felt it was our imperative duty to use all the power God has given us to aid this noble-hearted American in continuing the work of saving human lives to which he has devoted unsparingly, and at great personal sacrifice, his tremendous energy and administrative genius during the past six years, in which time he and his American colleagues have administered two billions of dollars of relief funds from all parts of the world with a total overhead expense of only

three-eighths of one per cent, with no remuneration to the American directors. Now he asks us all to help save the children who are in imminent danger of starvation this coming winter.

There they are, in the midst of wrecked homes, and farms; and factories; in cities crowded with masses of refugees without sustaining food for children, through the destruction of live stock; seeds for planting, raw materials, tools, and machinery gone; great areas with everything burned, or looted, or smashed; vast unemployment for workers; no means of subsistence; a land of economic ruin, of mutilated life, and lingering death; and in the midst of it all—the little children.

In long lines they are waiting at the American food-kitchens. Will the food be there for them? Will they be turned away? There are no happy, healthy faces in those long lines—not one. You have seen rags and barefooted children, but never so many little boys and girls literally drest in tatters. Soon it will be very cold, and for those bare little feet and legs and arms there is nothing at home to put on.

Hollow faces and shrunken bodies are so common that their real condition does not become evident until we inquire more closely, and then we find that most of them are from one to five years back in their growth. Children of eight years old have not reached the normal size of two and a half. They are just learning to stand alone. Others almost as old can not yet stand on their feet. Their arms, and legs, and spines, and chests are twisted and warped. The flesh and skin are shriveled on their bones. It is surprising that life can still exist there. If they can have food they will gradually regain their health and strength, but with most of them it is a question of now or never. Starvation and tuberculosis will not wait.

In Poland alone a million five hundred thousand such children must be cared for. In Latvia and Esthonia the people are living mostly on a diet made from potato-flour, oat-flour, and sawdust. In Czecho-Slovakia, in Hungary, in Austria, and in other countries of central and southeastern Europe, two millions more are in dire need of food; and who stops to ask regarding creed, or race, or nationality when a little child is starving? Children are just children the world over, and the great American heart is big enough to care for them all.

But the appeal now is not for all. The three and a half millions of children in immediate danger of starvation, if this organization fails, who must have food at once, are only a fraction of the total number. The hungry children of those destitute countries have been examined by competent physicians, and only those whose wasted little bodies are reduced to the minimum weight, and whose endurance of hunger has reached the end which merges into actual starvation, are admitted to the American kitchens and given one meal a day. It is hard to turn away thousands of hungry boys and girls—to hear them ask, pleadingly, "Do I weigh too much?" "Am I not thin enough?" "Can't I come any more?" But this restricting of food to the extreme cases is compulsory, because there isn't enough for all.

And these neediest ones can not reach the kitchens through the cold winds and the snow

barefooted and in the pitiful rags which form only a partial covering for their bodies. They must have clothes. Each outfit consists of one pair of warm woolen stockings, one pair of boots, and a little overcoat. This one meal a day, and these boots, stockings, and little coats can be supplied only if we give them. If we do not, the slaughter of the innocents by cold and starvation will be appalling.

Among the more than two million men and women who will read this page there is not one—there can not be a single one—whose heart will not respond gladly and eagerly to the challenge of this great need. We are asked, you with us, to cooperate with Mr. Hoover in raising twenty-three million dollars to feed and clothe these children and save them from death this winter. It can be done. It shall be done! THE LITERARY DIGEST knows its readers and the deep earnestness, the quick sympathy, the great-hearted generosity they always show when any real human need calls to them. You have never been called upon in vain. We are counting on you now with a great confidence. We know, also, how truly you represent the American spirit, which beats in the hearts of a hundred and three millions more in this big land of plenty, a spirit which leaps ready at every such call, and is never weary in well-doing. We are not a hermit nation, isolated from the world, when suffering and want cry out to us from anywhere under the sun. A great, a beautiful, and heart-sustaining hope supports these stricken people—America will come to their relief. For in the far places of the earth, where famine stalks, one name and one alone is synonymous with rescue and hope—and that name is America.

The small individual unit of ten dollars will provide the coat and boots and stockings and one meal a day for one child this winter. We urge our readers—we urge every one whose eyes are on these words—to give quickly as many of these units as possible, **to buy for themselves that precious and priceless thing, the life of a little child**—as many of them as they can, and every one will be a shining star in an eternal crown. It was the Divine Love of little children, who came to earth as a little child, and who reigns now as the King of Glory, who said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me." He does not forget, nor fail to reward.

So deeply do we ourselves feel the urgency of this great need, knowing all the facts, that we should feel a heavy burden of guilt if we did not go beyond anything we have felt possible heretofore in order to save these innocent children from suffering and death. Therefore, THE LITERARY DIGEST will start this fund with the sum of \$25,000 to feed and clothe twenty-five hundred little boys and girls this winter. What an inspiration it will be to all of us—what an inspiration and example to many thousands who may be uncertain how much to give—if in the very first week there shall be a great shower of checks for \$1000, for \$5000, for \$10,000, as well as a deluge of smaller amounts, to send the fund rolling on toward the necessary twenty-three millions. Let us all see again what the father's heart is like in this great rich land of America. Let us have again a wondrous revelation of the heart of American motherhood. Let us have a great outpouring of love and helpfulness in the name of Him who said, "Feed my lambs!"

President-Elect Harding, in a Great-Hearted Response, Sets an Example for all Americans

In the midst of the flood of telegrams, telephone calls, and election returns pouring in upon him from every part of the United States, Mr. Harding turned from it all to write and dispatch the following telegram from his home:

THE LITERARY DIGEST, NEW YORK CITY:—

I have just now read your splendid appeal to the people of America in behalf of three and a half millions of unfortunate children in Central and Southeastern Europe, who are the helpless victims of the Great War. Because such a movement for relief reveals the true heart of America, because it bespeaks an American desire to play a great people's part in relieving and restoring God's own children, I want to commend and support your noble undertaking. In seeking God's blessing for ourselves I am sure He will bless us the more abundantly if we share our good fortune in acts of sympathy and human fellowship. I wish you a success which will reveal anew the unselfishness of our great people. I am forwarding you my check for two thousand five hundred dollars by mail today.

Marion, Ohio, November 4, 1920.

(Signed) WARREN G. HARDING.

Make all checks payable to "The Literary Digest Child-Feeding Fund" and mail them direct to The Literary Digest. Every remittance will be acknowledged, and The Literary Digest will be responsible for every dollar contributed, to see that it goes, without one penny deducted, to the purpose for which it is given. Address, Child-Feeding, THE LITERARY DIGEST, 354-360 Fourth Avenue, New York.