

BELGIUM, ITS INDUSTRY SHATTERED AND HOMES GONE, NOW HAS FAMINE

Will Irwin, Writing of Pitiful Plight of War-Stricken People, Says Nation's Own Valor Has Crushed and Starved It—Market Garden of Western Europe Made Desolate by Armies.



German soldiers share meal with homeless Belgian war waifs.

BY WILL IRWIN.

WHEN the German army was passing through Belgium last August, the month of harvests, we used to remark, casually, now and then: "Well, there's one thing; it looks like starvation in this country this winter." This was in the beginning. We which, rather carelessly, we had enough of the horror of war on every hand to keep us from bothering very much about a far-away, imaginary danger. But the situation, when we stopped to think about it, admitted of only one interpretation. Belgium is the most thickly populated country in Europe; it is almost like one great town, interspersed with fields. As a matter of cold statistics, we know that it raised less than 40 per cent of its own food. The war struck it in the midst of the harvest. Unlike Germany and France, Belgium had made no provision to feed itself in time of trouble. Its biggest, more warlike neighbors had reckoned with the harvest as part of the plan of war. Germany, across the eastern boundary, was putting the landsturm, not in the trenches, but into the fields, that they might garner the last grain of wheat. To the south, France concerned herself almost as much with the harvest as with the mobilization.



German to reduce the matter to an exact science.

Fields Robbed of Men.
But the war struck Belgium unprepared—in an industrial, if not in a military, sense. The heavy mobilization took many of the farmers and field hands away, and the government had no time in the sudden, pressing duty of resisting invasion, to set aside other laborers for this work. Here and there fields went ungarnered for lack of men. And before any one could touch the late crops the Germans were upon them, fighting skirmishes and pitched battles all over the east and north. The rural population fled in great numbers from the advance, as they have been fleeing everywhere. Through all the strip which Germany used as a route to France I saw ruined harvests. The wheat was falling from the stalks; the cabbages were growing untended. In the region to the west of Brussels—about Ghent, Bruges and Ostend—the peasants had more time, since the Germans did not take possession of that region until late in the autumn. Here, alone in all Belgium, was there anything like a full crop this year.

Good Old Days Gone.
The German army, in this war, "has gone back to some of the ways of ancient warfare. The custom of taking hostages, for example, was supposed to be a dead issue by modern armies—one thought of the days of Julius Caesar when he read on the walls of every town that Burgomester So-and-So and Echevins This-and-That had been seized as hostages to answer with their lives for the good behavior of the populace. One thought of Alexander when you learned that in every large city which occupied they demanded a cash tribute. Again, it carried you back to those good old days when you learned that in every large city occupied by the Germans a cash tribute equivalent to several days' provision for either the garrison or the main force had been commandeered immediately upon occupation.

Industry Is Killed.
Mind, I am stating facts, not writing criticism. War is war. Perhaps we have waged it too politely in the last century; perhaps it is better to make it severe that it may be the sooner over. I am obliged to say so, also, that for many of the supplies taken from private citizens—such as beef animals—the conquerors did pay, either in cash, in "chits," or in orders on the Bank of France—orders whose validity looked better in middle August than it did in early September.

Germany Gets Supplies.
Even Germany found ways and means to get some supply of raw materials. The German army, in this war, "has gone back to some of the ways of ancient warfare. The custom of taking hostages, for example, was supposed to be a dead issue by modern armies—one thought of the days of Julius Caesar when he read on the walls of every town that Burgomester So-and-So and Echevins This-and-That had been seized as hostages to answer with their lives for the good behavior of the populace. One thought of Alexander when you learned that in every large city which occupied they demanded a cash tribute. Again, it carried you back to those good old days when you learned that in every large city occupied by the Germans a cash tribute equivalent to several days' provision for either the garrison or the main force had been commandeered immediately upon occupation.

divial, is a great weaving center. You might weave woolen cloth. The Flemish weavers had small stock ahead, and much of that went up in the smoke of war. They had been depending on imports of raw materials from the north. For this necessity of manufacturing the Belgians depended on their own coal mines along the southern border—especially in the line which runs through Charleroi and Mons. Now, that line was by the end of August a dark and bloody ground of the war. It was there that the allies made their first stand. It was only a few miles away that the Germans made their own stand when they drove them back from Paris. Finally, the winter came, and the coal again. Coal is bulky. It takes much railroad service to move it. And for the purposes of industry there was practically no coal left in Belgium. The manufacturer could not get his goods to market, and equally he could not get power to his goods.

Killing Only Business.
Scarcely a chimney was smoking in all Flanders during August and September. Then the Germans took Antwerp and cleaned up the coast strip about Ghent, Bruges and the harbor cities of Ostend. In them, also, the fires of industry went out. In that southwest strip of Belgium, hitherto one of the most thickly settled and productive parts of the little, busy kingdom, the two armies are fighting yet, and may be fighting all winter. In such a district there is no business at all except the business of killing.

Western Europe's Garden Gone.
Of farming I have spoken already. But there is another special point worthy of note here. Belgium raised little grain—few staple crops of any kind. Her land was too valuable for that. She was the market garden of Western Europe. Her fields, cultivated to the last inch, produced mostly perishable vegetables which went straight from the hands of the farmer to the train, and then to the shops of London, Berlin and Northern France. Here again comes in the paralysis of transportation. She did manage to save many of her potatoes and cabbages. I believe cabbage soup, when I last heard from Belgium, was the staple article of diet. But the lettuce, the endives, the parsley and all vegetables of this class became so much dead stock, useless for winter food, equally useless for sale. There was some dairy produce, but as the Germans came that stopped. They bought up the cows for beef; those they missed went one by one to feed the population, since Belgium could import no more meat.

stopped—that was Belgium in early September, when the Germans settled down upon it. Everywhere throughout the land the unemployed sat at the doors of their houses and stared dully at their conquerors, because there was nothing else to do.

Brussels, City Without Hope.
Brussels was a city of aimless, futile crowds. The unemployed, men and women alike, gathered in groups on the sidewalks, talking under the breath, or drifted across the city in headless, disorganized mobs. One such mob, back of the Palace Hotel, in a small, sunken park. As I passed down a street near by I saw men running and shouting. The crowd stared at this spectacle for a while with blank eyes and drifted away. They looked like an army of the unemployed in an industrial crisis, only with an added hopelessness in their eyes.

We expected trouble then; that such trouble had been averted is, perhaps, equally to the good sense of the better Belgians, to the judicious severity of the Germans, and finally to the tact and developed our American representatives, notably Brand Whitlock. Indeed, we just missed this crisis a night or so after the Germans struck all over the country. A party of about eight German garrison was reinforced by 2000 men sent back from the front. Without newspapers, a party of rumors, the people believed that this meant a German defeat. The aimless crowds grew briefer in their movements, the thrill of coming trouble in the air.

Fate of City in Balance.
"Gentlemen," said the German commandant to his Belgian hostages that day, "I would not hold you responsible for any part of your beautiful city, but you know what we might have to do!" The influential men of Brussels went from corner to corner, begging the mobs, begging the people to go home, assuring them that the Germans had not restrained. The police cleared all the public squares. The Germans trained three machine guns on the Place de la Station. The garrison slept that night on the ground. Along the streets there an incident occurred which might have set off the spark. A German officer came back to his hotel very drunk, and "shot up the lobby" with a automatic pistol. Fortunately by that hour the populace had gone to bed. Had it happened four hours earlier, this tiny break in discipline would probably have precipitated the riot. A small thing to bring slaughter, burnings and reprisals on the heads of the whole city.

That, it turned out, was to be the climax of fears for Brussels; somehow she had avoided ever since August, disaster as affected poor Louvain. But the unemployed are still there, huddling in the slums and tenements of Brussels as they huddle in every tenement, every farmhouse of poor Belgium. Only they have grown much hungrier, much less hopeful, much more dulled and despondent; the spirit for a riot, perhaps, is not in them. Only the final desperation of hunger will bring it out.

Blight on European Peoples.
Of course, this war is horrible beyond any previous conception we have had of war, and the heaped up trenches of the dead, the human wreckage in the base hospitals, the epic sufferings of the men in the front, do not comprise all its horrors. Worse than any man of sympathetic spirit, is the blight of misery over the European peoples whose land has been left behind. But there is still nobility left in war, even such brutal, wholesale, mechanical war as this. There was a kind of exaltation the way the Belgians dismissed the thought of their own miseries. It reminded one of the spirit which the Californians showed after their comparatively minor disaster in San Francisco. There it wasn't etiquette for a man to mention that he was ruined. So, too, with Belgium. The people would not talk on that subject. The farmer who spoke some English saw his doorway near Arles and spoke with me—candidly and cautiously—on the war.

"I suppose it will be a hard winter for you here," I said.
"Oh, certainly," said he, and turned the subject to matters which interested him more—my new fur coat. He turned me back to the subject and held him to it, brutally.
"I expect starvation," I said.
"Certainly," he replied; "my crop is gone. So are my cattle. There's only a little grain in town. I have two sons in the army" and he turned to his wife and sons, oblivious to his own hungry future.

Nobody Whines in Belgium.
A Belgian centennial concerned in getting food for the people, had been doing heroic service for the American commission for the Relief of Belgium. The German soldiers in their visit to London in order to help the work of months ago this man was a real import from Belgium. His business radiated effort. He had a good deal of money, he said, as a mere parenthesis in a sentence, "of course, my business has been ruined." He had a good deal of money, he said, as a mere parenthesis in a sentence, "of course, my business has been ruined." He had a good deal of money, he said, as a mere parenthesis in a sentence, "of course, my business has been ruined."

Officer to Take Charge.
General George Bell, Jr., of Seventh Brigade, to Leave for Texas.
VANCOUVER BARRACKS, Wash., Dec. 19.—(Special.)—General George Bell, Jr., commander of the Seventh Brigade, will leave Monday, December 3, for his new station in command of the Fifth Brigade at Galveston, Tex. Mrs. Bell will accompany her husband as far as Omaha, where she will visit.
Lieutenant Lawrence E. Hohl, aid de camp to General Bell, will accompany the general to Galveston.
Who will assume command of the Seventh Brigade has not been learned here yet.

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LIFE INSURANCE TODAY PROTECTS MAN'S DUTIES

Senator Sherman From Illinois, Tells How Policy Substitutes Contract That Extends Person's Productive Period by Eliminating Hazard.

BY LAWRENCE V. SHERMAN, United States Senator from Illinois.
TODAY is a sharply drawn line between self-support and charity. One is creative, the other is exhaustive, and if not supplied by the former, destroys its source of supply. One develops, the other merely sustains. Self-support arouses all the better faculties. It includes in its terms all dependent on the economic unit. Every incentive ought to be given, and every burden to self-support removed wherever possible. Charity ought always to be reduced to a minimum. The more self-support is hindered the more charity must relieve where individual effort fails.
Neither universal charity nor a universal distribution of property will solve the problem of self-support. Both utterly fail to respond to the normal industrial person during the span of his productive years. Self-support does not take heed merely of productive capacity, age, disability and misfortune, but of every condition that human life. Mere thrift alone, the sturdy frugality that limits outgo until the income leaves a surplus, is not a certain protection to the family. Such productive effort is perpetually subject to the destructive vicissitudes of life.
Modern life insurance protects the whole scope of man's economic obligations by substituting a contract that extends his productive period by eliminating the hazard of death. The certainty of a secured contract is substituted for the uncertainty of an uncovered future. It adds to thrift a guaranty that will not be stricken down before its purpose shall have been accomplished.
Risk Is Distributed.
The risk is distributed through given periods and great numbers. The cost is so divided that present payments are within reach of all. The certainty of the responsible life insurance contract life insurance policy could be increased in amount and diminished in annual cost it would be a great benefit. The head of a family who has not accumulated income-producing property may thereby capitalize his future earnings. He builds up a barrier against uncertainty. He creates a sinking fund against possible misfortune and the certainty of death. He does so by joining with the ability and resources of a great multitude of others who are inspired by a like purpose. It is the mutual contract of experience and prudent reflection. It was not devised by a careless and improvident human carn-

OFFICER TO TAKE CHARGE

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In warring against the evil of poverty and want it is National.
The regulations under which life insurance business is done ought to be National and not local. It has risen to the dignity, importance and power of a National undertaking, more than the transportation lines of the United States. No single line of human effort reaches so generally every walk and condition of life. Not a bushel of corn can be turned into distilled liquor without the regulation of Congress. Not a cigar can be rolled and sold without the watchful eye of the Government. Still the hundreds of millions of investments safeguard life insurance contracts and many hundreds of millions of policies carried. The vast responsibilities entailed are without a single regulation of the Government of the United States. It is proper now to institute a movement to amend the Federal Constitution so to give Congress such power.

COTTAGE GROVE ASPIRES

"Cleanest City in State," Is Goal Set for Coming Year.
COTTAGE GROVE, Or., Dec. 19.—(Special.)—Cottage Grove is going after the reputation of being one of the proudest and cleanest cities in the state during 1915.
There was a lively and enthusiastic discussion of the subject at the annual meeting of the Commercial Club and a civic improvement committee was appointed to have the work in charge. The members of the committee are J. S. Medley, E. R. Mills and Ray Trask.
Chairman Medley is working out plans for the season's work. It is probable that the City Council will be asked to have the outlying paved streets swept oftener. The city has a large amount of paving for a city of its size, but much of it does not show up to best advantage because of not being kept clean. It is certain that the Council will be asked to enforce the ordinance against allowing weeds to grow within the city.
At the same time an effort will be made to stir up a great interest in parkways, lawns and flower gardens. The co-operation of the women of the city will be asked.

POOR BEING CARED FOR

Centralia Organization Will Provide Baskets for Christmas.
CENTRALIA, Wash., Dec. 19.—(Special.)—The Associated Charities is actively engaged in caring for the city's poor at Christmas time. On the day before Christmas a basket will be delivered to each family reported to be in needy circumstances. The Boy Scouts have volunteered to deliver the baskets. The charity board has appointed the following directors: One-year term, H. McCleary, Mrs. R. A. Wilson, Mrs. Nellie Muck, H. C. Gilliam and C. R. Fowler; two-year term, William Scates, Mrs. William Perry, Rev. F. B. Dorris, Dr. P. J. Rieckford and Mrs. W. W. Dickerson; three-year term, John Galvin, J. R. Buxton, Dr. F. G. Titus, Miss Myrtle Cottrill and H. M. Robinson.