

GERMAN WAR PRACTICES

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Here is the testimony of another German soldier on the Eastern front: "Russian Poland, December 18, '14. In the name of Christianity I send you these words.

"My conscience forces me as a Christian German soldier to inform you of these lines.

"Wounded Russians are killed with the bayonet according to orders. And Russians who have surrendered are often shot down in masses according to orders, in spite of their heart-rending prayers.

"In the hope that you, as the representative of a Christian State will protest against this, I sign myself.

"A German Soldier and Christian.

"I would give my name and regiment, but these words could get me court-martialed for divulging military secrets."

The third letter from the Western front, shows the same horror of the system of which the writer was a witness.

"To the American Government, Washington, U. S. A.

"Englishmen who have surrendered are shot down in small groups. With the French one is more considerate. I ask whether men let themselves be taken prisoner in order to be disarmed and shot down afterwards? Is that chivalry in battle? It is no longer a secret among the people; one hears everywhere that few prisoners are taken; they are shot down in small groups. They say naively: 'We don't want any unnecessary mouths to feed. Where there is no one to enter complaint, there is no judge.' Is there no power in the world which can put an end to these murders and rescue the victims? Where is Christianity? Where is right? Might is right.

"A Soldier and Man Who is No Barbarian."

Many of the Germans, as has been already indicated, do not believe the reports of the atrocities committed by the Belgian civilians and refuse to accept the system of frightfulness. The Vorwarts, the leading socialist paper, which has a very wide circle of readers, has opposed the policy of frightfulness. All honor to its editors who have so courageously opposed the powerful military authority! Its editorial, entitled "Our Foes," published August 23, 1914, reads as follows:

"We wish to show ourselves humane and friendly towards those whom the fortune of war has played into our hands as prisoners. But we wish also to be humane towards our foes on the field. We must fight them. * * * But fighting does not mean murdering. It does not mean being barbarous. * * *

"What should one say when even such an organ as the Deutsches Offizier-Blatt expresses its sympathy with a demand that 'the beasts' who are taken as franc-tireurs should not be killed but only wounded so that they may then be left to a fate which makes any help impossible? Or what should we say when the Deutsches Offizier-Blatt states that a punitive destruction even of whole regions cannot afford full recompense for the bones of a single murdered Pomeranian grenadier? Those are the desires of blood-thirsty fanatics and we are thoroughly ashamed of ourselves because it is possible that there are people among us who urge such things. Such disclosures in themselves, even if they are not followed out, are likely to place our fighting quite in the wrong before all the world. * * * Let us show knightliness even though we are of the proletariat. Let us take such pains that when the fight has finally been fought it will also not be so difficult again to work in common as brothers with our class associates on the other side of the border.

On the following day, August 24, 1914, the Vorwarts returned to the attack in an editorial "Against Barbarism."

Some Germans Demand "Orgies of Barbarism."

"One might, in the first place, possibly believe that such a demand for a bloody vengeance (against alleged Belgian outrages) emanates from a single disease-racked brain; but it appears that whole groups among certain classes who represent German Kultur want to indulge in orgies of barbarism and to devise a whole system for the purpose of organizing 'a war of revenge.'

"What of law and custom! Such thoughts do not stir a 'great nation.' Thus in a leading article of the Berliner Neueste Nachrichten, the demand is made that all the authorities in Brussels—one, the second Burgomaster, is generously excepted—should be immediately seized and subjected to trial in order to expiate the wrongs which, according to fragmentary and highly uncertain reports, were said to have been committed by the people. They demand that the captured city should immediately pay a fine of 500,000,000 marks; that all stores of the conquered territory be requisitioned without paying the inhabitants a single penny for them."

Three years later, August 26, 1917, the Vorwarts quoted the following passage from the Deutsche Tageszeitung:

Still Hold Some Opinions. "We have a ring of politicians who hold that might makes right (Macht-politik) who despises the forces of the inner life and believe that they must eliminate all ethical points of view * * * from foreign and social

tion on its first page, in large print:

"TO CIVILIANS.

"The Minister of the Interior advises civilians in case the enemy should show himself in their district:

"Not to fight; To utter no insulting or threatening words;

"To remain within their houses and close the windows; so that it will be impossible to allege that there was any provocation;

"To evacuate any houses or isolated hamlet which the soldiers may occupy in order to defend themselves, so that it cannot be alleged that civilians have fired;

"An act of violence committed by a single civilian would be a crime for which the law provides arrest and punishment. It is all the more reprehensible in that it might serve as a pretext for measures of oppression, resulting in bloodshed or pillage, or the massacre of the innocent population with the women and children."

In the hope of arousing the sympathy and securing the aid of the neutral nations, the Belgian government appointed a committee to ascertain the facts about the German practices. The evidence collected by the Belgian commissioners is detailed and explicit, and their reports give names, places, and dates. It is not possible, however, to include in this pamphlet more than the fol-

lowing summary of the charges they make against the Germans:

"1. That thousands of unoffending civilians, including women and children, were murdered by the Germans.

"2. That women had been outraged.

"3. That the custom of the German soldiers immediately on entering a town was to break into wine-shops and the cellars of private houses and madden themselves with drink.

"4. That German officers and soldiers looted on a gigantic and systematic scale, and, with the connivance of the German authorities, sent back a large part of the booty to Germany.

"5. That the pillage had been accompanied by wanton destruction and by besial and sacrilegious practices.

"6. That cities, towns, villages, and isolated buildings were destroyed.

"7. That in the course of such destruction human beings were burnt alive.

"8. That there was a uniform practice of taking hostages and thereby rendering great numbers of admittedly innocent people responsible for the alleged wrongdoing of others.

"9. That large numbers of civilian men and women had been virtually enslaved by the Germans, being (Continued on page 7, column 2.)

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