

Women Outraged by Invasions, Unoffending Civilians Massacred

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make no difference," he said, "he is reasonable. My husband was taken off my son, who was at my side, took me to another cellar. The same soldier came and dragged him out and made him walk in front of him, kicking him as he went. The poor boy could hardly walk. That morning when they were in the house, the Germans had cut through the windows of the house, and a bullet had come into the room where my son was, and he had been wounded in the calf by a bullet. After my husband and son had come I was dragged all through the house by the Germans, with their rifles leveled at my head. I was compelled to see their dead general. Then my daughter and I were taken to the street, where the Germans were surrounded by a cordon of soldiers, and compelled to witness the destruction of our beloved town. And then, in the afternoon, about 1 P. M., my husband and I were taken to a house, where my husband and I were kept together. My brother-in-law was with them. They were being led out to the execution.

Picked Ten to Kill. The houses were set on fire with special apparatus, and the people were driven from their houses, already burning, and some were shot in the streets.

On the following day a number of the prisoners were taken under the orders of an officer, together with the burgomaster, his brother and his son. In the morning, which is spoken of by many witnesses, a clear account is given of the events of the day. It was the morning of the 11th of August, and every other man took his rifle, and eventually there were about sixty of us, including some of the women, and some of the children. All made us accompany them. They were taken to walk with their rifles, and were stopped and made to stand in a line, and an officer, a big fat man who had a blueish uniform, came along the line and picked out ten of the prisoners. His brother and his son, together with some of the other men, were picked out. In all, ten men were picked out to be taken to the execution. I then heard some shots fired, and I and the other men turned round, and we saw all the ten men, including the burgomaster, were lying on the ground. This incident is spoken of by many witnesses in some of their depositions appear in the appendix.

Gelrode. On the same day, at Gelrode, a small village close to Aerschot, twenty-five civilians were imprisoned in the church, seven were taken out by fifteen German soldiers in charge of the prisoners. One of the seven tried to jump over the wall, but he was shot and remained behind alive. This was on the night of August 19. No prisoner whatever had been given. The man in question had been taken to the German army, and was found on the night of August 19. Here, as at Aerschot, precautions had been taken previously to secure the delivery up of all arms in the hands of civilians.

Aerschot and District. Period II. (August 25.) Immediately after the battle of Malines, which resulted in the capture of the district of Malines, Sempt, Hofstade and Eppenheim, a long series of murders were committed either just before or during the retreat of the army. Many of the inhabitants, who were young children, were the victims of these revolting circumstances.

Malines. In Malines itself many bodies were seen. One witness saw a German soldier cut a woman's breast after he had looted her, and saw many other bodies of women in the streets.

Hofstade. Hofstade a number of houses had been set on fire and many corpses were seen in the streets. Two witnesses speak of having seen the body of a young man pierced by bayonet thrusts, with the wrists cut off.

Murder of a Priest. One witness describes the scene graphically: "The whole of the prisoners, men, women and children, were placed in the church. Nobody was allowed to go outside the church to obey the calls of nature. The church had to be used for that purpose. We were afterward allowed to go outside the church for this purpose, and then

I saw the elegyman of Gerode standing by the wall of the church with his hands raised, and he was shot. The actual details of the murder of the priest are as follows: The priest was struck several times by the soldiers on the head. He was pushed up against the wall of the church. He was in Flemish to be allowed to stand with his face to the wall and tried to turn round. The Germans stepped him, and then turned about his face to the wall, and his hands above his head. An hour later the same witness saw the priest still standing there. He was then led away by the German soldiers, and he was shot by the Germans, and his face against the wall of a house, he was shot by five soldiers.

Some of the prisoners in the church were taken to the village of Sempt, until the arrival of the Belgian army, on September 11, when they were released. Others were marched to Louvain and eventually merged with the prisoners, some of them were taken to the surrounding districts, and taken to Germany and elsewhere.

Aerschot and District. Period III. (September.) It is unnecessary to describe with particularity the events of the period beginning about September 10. The Belgian soldiers who had remained in the village of Aerschot, who must have been murdered in Sempt and the other villages. August 25, the day when the army had been given up long before.

At Hecht several children had been murdered. One of two or three years old was found nailed to the door of a farmhouse by his hands and feet. A small farm, burning close by, formed a convenient means of getting rid of the bodies. They were thrown into the flames from the bayonets. It is right to add that no commissioned officers were present at the time.

At Eppenheim, on August 25, a pregnant woman, who had been wounded by a bayonet, was discovered in the convent. She was dying on the road, six dead bodies of laborers were seen.

Louvain and District. The events spoken of as having occurred in and around Louvain between August 19 and 25 deserve close attention. For six days the Germans were in peaceful occupation of the city. No houses were set on fire, and no looting. There was a certain amount of discipline was effectively maintained. The condition of Louvain during the day was one of relative peace and quietude, presenting a striking contrast to the previous and contemporaneous conduct of the German army elsewhere.

On the evening of August 25 a sudden change took place. The Germans, on that day repulsed by the Belgians, had retreated to and reconquered Louvain. Immediately thereafter the holocaust of its population commenced.

On the evening of the 25th firing could be heard in the direction of Herent, some three kilometers from Louvain. An alarm was sounded in the city. There were disorder and confusion, and at 8 o'clock horses attached to baggage wagons stampeded in the street and rifle fire commenced. This was the Rue de la Station and came from the German police guard, twenty-one in number, who, seeing the troops arrive in disorder, thought it was the enemy. Then the corps of militiamen, their rifles fixed to their belts with the words "Gott mit uns," and their equipment consisted of a hatchet, a sprig, a small shovel and a revolver. Fires blazed up in the direction of the Rue de la Station. Martin's Barracks, and later in the Place de la Station. Meanwhile an incessant fusillade was kept up on the windows of the houses. In their efforts to escape the flames the inhabitants climbed the walls. "My mother and servants," says a witness, "had to do the same, and took refuge at Monsieur A's, whose cellars are situated in the Rue de la Station. A little later we withdrew to Monsieur A's stables, where about thirty people who had got there by climbing the walls were to be found. Some of these poor wretches were killed. Twenty walls a ring came at the bell. We opened the door. Several civilians flung themselves under the porch. The Germans were firing upon them from the street. Every moment they were lighting up, accompanied by explosions. In the middle of the night I heard a knock at the outer door of the house which led into a little street, and heard a woman's voice crying for help. I opened the door, and just as I was going to let her in a rifle shot fired from the street by a German soldier, rang out and the woman fell dead at my feet. About 9 o'clock in the morning things got quieter and we took the opportunity of venturing into the street. A German who was carrying a silver box and a number of boxes of cigars told us we were to go to the station, where trains would be waiting for us. When we got to the Place de la Station we saw in the square seven or eight dead bodies of murdered civilians. Not a single house in the place was standing. A whole row of houses behind the station at Blaupout was burned. After being driven hither and thither interminably by the Germans, we were treated so roughly and insulted us throughout, we were divided." The prisoners were then distributed between different bodies of troops, and marched in the direction of Herent, including a number of people of good position (the names of several are given), were thus taken to Herent, where a few of the civilians, it is estimated, were to be taken to Herent. The truth is that it was the Germans themselves who were firing to frighten us. There was not a single civilian in the neighborhood. Short after the march to Malines. We were insulted and threatened. The officers were worse than the men. We got to Campenout about 7 P. M. and were locked into the church with all the male population of the village. Some priests had joined our numbers. We had nothing to eat or drink since the evening of the 11th before. A few of the Herent soldiers gave us water to drink, but no official

took the trouble to see that we were fed. On the 26th (Wednesday), in the city of Louvain, massacre, fire and destruction met on the university, with its library, the church of St. Peter, and many houses were set on fire, and others taken prisoners and compelled to go with the troops. Soldiers went through the streets saying "Man hat geschossen," "one soldier has been seen going along shooting in the air."

Many of the people hid in cellars, but the soldiers shot down through the gratings. Some citizens were shot on opening the doors, others in endeavor to escape. Among other persons whose houses were burnt was an old man who was ninety lying dangerously ill, who was taken up in his garden all night. He died shortly after in the hospital to which a friend took him the following morning.

On Friday, the 27th, orders were given that every one should leave the city, which was to be razed to the ground. Some citizens, including a canon of the cathedral, with his aged mother, were taken to the road to Tillemont. Among the number were about twenty priests from Louvain. They were insulted and threatened, and some were shot. They were made to march with their hands raised, and some were shot. Women and sick persons among them, to Tillemont. Other groups of prisoners were taken by other routes, some early in the morning through various villages in the direction of Malines.

On August 28th, this group, then consisting of about 250 persons, and the women and children, were afterward ordered, and all made to stay the night in the church at Campenout. Next day, the 29th, this group, then consisting of about 250 persons, and the women and children, were afterward ordered, and all made to stay the night in the church at Campenout. Next day, the 29th, this group, then consisting of about 250 persons, and the women and children, were afterward ordered, and all made to stay the night in the church at Campenout.

On Saturday, the 11th of September, a woman was bayoneted in the street. Another woman was shot dead at the corner on the same night. On the following day the witness was taken prisoner together with thirty others. The money and the prisoners were taken to the front, and they were subsequently used as a screen for the German troops who were at that moment engaged in a conflict with the Belgian army in the town itself. The Germans burnt a number of houses in this town. Corpses of fourteen civilians were seen in the streets on this occasion.

A well educated witness who visited the Wetteren Hospital shortly after the month of September, in connection with the fighting near Louvain, and other civilians wounded. One of these stated that he took refuge in the house of his sister-in-law; that the Germans suggested that he and his wife, who was on fire, seized him, threw him on the ground, and hit him on the head with the butt end of a rifle, and ran him through the thigh with a bayonet. The witness placed him with seventeen or eighteen others in front of the German troops, threatening them with revolvers. They said that they were going to make the prisoners of Alost pay for the losses sustained by the Germans. At this hospital was an old woman of eighty completely transfixed by a bayonet.

This disorganized mass of civilians, singly or in groups, were taken from German soldiers' diaries, of which the following are representative examples: Barthel, who was a sergeant and member of the 2d Company of the 1st Guards Regiment on Foot, and who during the campaign received the Iron Cross, says, under date 10th of August, 1914: "I transported 600 Belgians from the railway station in the morning. Of these, 80, including the Oberbürgermeister, were shot, according to martial law."

Mather, of the 4th Company of the Iron Cross, says, under date 10th of August, 1914: "I transported 600 Belgians from the railway station in the morning. Of these, 80, including the Oberbürgermeister, were shot, according to martial law."

Bombardier Wetzel, of the 2d Mounted Battery, 1st Kurhessian Field Artillery Regiment, No. 11, records an incident which happened in French territory near Lille on the 11th of October: "We had no light, but we caught about twenty men and shot them." By this time killing not in a fight would seem to have passed into a habit.

Diary No. 32 gives an accurate picture of what took place in Louvain: "What a sad scene! All the houses surrounding the railway station completely destroyed—only some foundation walls still standing! On the station square captured guns. At the end of a main street there is the Hotel Lillo, which has been completely destroyed, with all its beautiful turrets, a sharp contrast. One hundred and

not deny that non-combatants were systematically killed in large numbers during the first weeks of the invasion, and this, so far as we know, has never been officially denied. If it were denied, the flight and continued voluntary exile of thousands of Belgian refugees would go far to contradict a denial, for there is no historical parallel in modern times for the flight of a large part of a nation before an invader. The invaders appear to have proceeded on the theory that any chance shot coming from an unexpected place was fired by civilians. One favorite form of the allegation was that priests had fired from the church tower. In many instances the soldiers of the allied armies used church towers and private houses as cover for their operations. At Aerschot, where the Belgian soldiers were stationed in the church tower and fired upon the Germans as they advanced, it was at once alleged by the Germans when they entered the town, and was difficult to disprove, that the firing had come from civilians. Thus one elementary error creeps at once into the German argument, for they were likely to confound, and did in some instances, civilian confusion, legitimate military operations with the hostile intervention of civilians. Troops belonging to the same army

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Journey to Cologne. The greatest number of prisoners from Louvain, however, were assembled at the station and taken by trains to Cologne. Their destination was their suffering and the ill treatment they received on the journey. One of the first trains started in the afternoon. It consisted of cattle trucks, about half being in the train. It took three days to get to Cologne. The prisoners had nothing to eat but a few biscuits each, and they were not allowed to get out for water and none was given. On a wet day the water was given in the form of beer. "Civilians who shot at the soldiers at Louvain" were written. Some were marched through Cologne afterward for the people to see. Ropes were put round the necks of some of the women, and they were to be hanged. After being kept a week at Cologne some of these prisoners were taken back this time only thirty or forty in a truck, and allowed to go free on arriving at Limburg. They were kept at the station during the night and the following day left for Cologne. For two days and a half they did not wish to supply food and then they received a loaf of bread among ten persons, and some water. The prisoners were afterward taken back to Belgium. They were in a great hurry to get on the train, crowded and almost without whatever may have been the case when the burning began on the evening of the 25th, it appears clear that the subject of destruction and outrages were done with a set purpose. It was not until the 26th that the library and other university buildings, the church of St. Peter and many houses were set on fire. It is noticed that cases occur in the depositions in which humane acts by individual officers and soldiers are mentioned, or in which officers are said to have expressed regret at being obliged to carry out orders for cruel action against the civilians. Similarly, we find entries in diaries which reveal a genuine pity for the population and a genuine regret at being obliged to carry out orders for cruel action against the civilians. Similarly, we find entries in diaries which reveal a genuine pity for the population and a genuine regret at being obliged to carry out orders for cruel action against the civilians. Similarly, we find entries in diaries which reveal a genuine pity for the population and a genuine regret at being obliged to carry out orders for cruel action against the civilians.

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