The European War Situation as Shown by Press Dispatches

GERMANS BURN DEAD IN GREAT BRICK KILNS TO CLEAR UP BATTLEFIELDS

Victims are Tied Together in Bunches of Fours and Dumped Into Raging Furnaces Formerly Used in Making Brick at Charleroi—Wounded Lie Hours on the Field Before Surgeons Arrive.

(By Herbert Corey.)
(Copyright, 1914, by Herbert Corey.)

London, Dec. 12.—"And so," said the old woman, "he died screaming."

It was in a little village in France. This war has been oddly spotty in its operations. Here one may find a little patch of territory that's untouched. Twenty miles away from the greatest battle line in all history the trains may be running regularly. People are going about their affairs. So it was in this little town. Its people had hardly heard the thunder of the guns.

"It was a stranger who did it," said the old woman. "A madman. Jacques was walking down the street, peaceful as you and me, thinking of his ducks, good man. This stranger met him. They talked together, and then the stranger shot him and ran away. Jacques died screaming."

All this happened six months ago. The stranger was not a soldier, but a madman. He is now, presumably, safe in some asylum. The tragedy—the one tragedy of that happy village for fifty years—has been the topic of conversation ever since. Its people have heard, but they have not comprehended the stories of murder by wholesale only a few miles away. They still think of the murder in detail of which they know.

We are all that way, to a greater or less extent. The censored phraseology in which the story is told means nothing to us. To say that "the British held the line" is as pallid as to say they had a breakfast of bacon. To say "the Germans made unavailing efforts to break through" offers no picture. One must bring imagination to bear to visualize the horried scenes of slaughter and agony out there on the front. That is my apology for this relation. It is an effort to furnish a few of the frightful facts on which imagination may feed.

Why the British Moved Back.

"Our line has been moved back three times in two weeks," said a British officer, speaking of one narrow point upon the battlefield. "It was not that we were forced back. We could not stand the stench."

The Germans had charged across an open field upon that first British trench. They had died there by hundreds. They had fallen there wounded. Neither side would agree to an armistice. Few of the sorely wounded were taken from the field under cover of darkness. The dead lay there—to rot.

Rot—that's the only word—to rot. They could not be buried. Neither side would give an inch. Other Germans charged over these dead forms, and in their turn were cut down by machine guns, and fell and rotted. Between charges the Germans could and did retire to a distance from that awful field. The British stayed in their trenches.

"Our men could not stand it," said the officer. "Twice we dug new trenches and moved back. But we held the line."

Unusual? Not at all. The same thing has been reported from every corner of a two-hundred mile field. The general offices on both sides welcome the cold weather. They do not fear they will be unable to provide their men with food and clothing and shelter against the weather. Even if they were unable to do so the men could stay in the veld. They could hold the line. But there are stenches too ghastly for humanity to stand.

"When frost comes," the officers will tell you, "conditions will improve.

That is the military way of sugar-coating a fact for soft civilian consumption. Let me give you another picture—a keynote glimpse at the monstrous thing that is going on over there in France. As this is being written the Germans hold Charleroi. At Charleroi and the nearby towns are great brick kilns. We have all seen them. A brick kiln in any country looks like any other brick kiln. At one time the fighting was described by the press bureau as "particularly spirited" about Charleroi.

There are things left behind upon the ground as mementos of that fighting. They are shapeless now, some of them. They are unbearable to the eye. They offend—good God, how they offend! They imperil health. They are a hindrance to military operations. The sweet air of France is poisoned by their myriads. For miles about a very miasma arises from the ground with which they are slowly merging.

Germans Burning the Dead.

So the Germans are ridding themselves of these nuisances that once were men—peaceful, honest men, like the poor murdered Jacques who thought only of his ducks. Great luggage vans are sent over these stricken fields. Soldiers—the impressed men of the countryside—hardened and debased by this constant contact with the sickening residue of humanity—throw these poor bodies into the vans as though they were logs of wood. Those great brick kilns of Charleroi are roaring by day and night. Their clay walls are heated to an incandescent brightness.

Mark the perfect efficiency of the war machine:

These bodies are tied together in fours. They are dumped into these glowing kilns. Sometimes a thick, black, oily liquor trickles slowly from them, through the piles of ash at the mouth of the furnaces. A thick, slow smoke rises from them. It leaves a greasy soot behind.

Revolting? Sickening? That is only because we have not quite yet reached that higher plane of practicality in which the men of war move. They realize that a body—a mere dead body—is of no further use in war. Therefore it is to be got rid of, unless it is possible to move on and forget it. There is no more sentiment in the riddance than if the useless remnant were a broken gun. It is with the living that we should concern ourselves.

Then turn to the abdominal wards of any hospital near the field. They are filled with men whose bodies have been torn until all that is left is an infinite capacity for agony. They are kept mercifully stupefied where it is possible. It is not always possible. Ask those who have walked past the door of such a ward if it is always possible. Sometimes putrefaction has set in before they have been taken from the field. This is the ward of the dying. One is never admitted. The surgeons are quite frank about it.

"We cannot permit you to see these things," they say. "They are too horrible. We only hope to lessen the pain until these men die."

Wounded Lying on Battlefield.

Yesterday I heard of a young Cambridge man, 20 years old, who had taken honors in his class. His parents had pinched and striven to put him through school. He went out with one of the London territorial regiments, tall, stalwart, handsome, the finest type of young Englishman. Two days later he was shot through the body. It was fifty hours—fifty hours—before the surgeons could get around to him. The grist of wounded had simply swamped them. In the fiftieth hour he died.

There was a Tommy—a nameless Tommy. The man who tells the story did not think even to take the number of his regiment. But that Tommy was shot through the body, and laid for two full days in the rain. Hell holds no tortures like that nameless Tommy suffered. He is only remembered because of the mournful comment he made to the surgeon who tried to ease him.

"It's the lucky man in this war," said this Tommy, "who gets killed quick."

There are other things. There are the "dysentery trains" of which I heard in Germany—heard upon the authority of a great medical man. Because there are too few of the hospital trains, with their swinging cots and their white enamelled operating rooms and their private rooms for doctors and nurses—and because there are too infinitely many wounded men—freight trains are used for the injured. These freight trains bring provisions and munitions to the fighters. The hurt men are placed upon their rough board floors. There is nothing else that can be done. It is a necessity of war.

"They travel, sometimes for four and five days," said this doctor. Sometimes they have no one to tend them for days. Sometimes they do not even get water. Most of these wounded men are suffering from dysentery."

There were weeks in which Germany's loss in wounded alone touched 50,000. No one knows how many the allies have lost. No one knows how many fortunates died without pain.

Do you begin to realize the meaning of war?

VON HINDENBURG, GENIUS OF THE WAR, AND HIS STAFF, TAKEN IN POLAND

This is the first photograph of Field Marshal von Hindenburg, considered by military experts to be, with General Joffre of the French army, the greatest genius developed by the war, taken since he has been in Poland. Despatches show that he has just captured Lodz, a city of 450,000 in Russian Poland. This is the third time he has driven his troops into Russian Poland. It is the second time within a few weeks that he came near Warsaw, one of the greatest Russian cities. If he should succeed in taking it he will have dealt a severe blow to the hopes of the Russians. Von Hindenburg was recently made field marshal by Kaiser Wilhelm for his success in the eastern war. He is shown in the center of the photograph.

AWFUL TOLL IN MINED VILLAGE

Two German Brigades are Blown up When French Quit Temporarily.

(By C. F. Bertelli, Staff Correspondent of the New York American.)

Paris, Dec. 11.—The Varennes fight was the bloodiest of the innumerable separate battles that mark the struggle for the Argonne. Varennes itself is an exquisitely pretty village set in a forest glade, with wooded slopes rising all round it.

A French regiment was quartered there when cavalry brought word that a strong German force was advancing with two brigades as an advance guard. This had been anticipated for days; several French batteries had been cleverly concealed on the slopes, the entire village had been mined.

On the approach of the German advance guard the village was emptied of its population and the regiment in occupation retired to the south, leaving the way clear for the Germans. What happened then was related to me by a farmer who refused to leave his farm.

"The Bavarian and Saxon brigades," he said, "with squadrons of cavalry entered the village unsuspectingly. They tethered their horses and were searching the houses for possible snipers when an incendiary shell fired by our artillery fell into the church.

"The whole village then seemed to heave. There was an ear-splitting crash, a mighty sheet of flame, and every building crumbled to the ground. I saw bodies, heads, arms, legs hurled high in the air above a dense claud of smoke; then I heard a terrifying wailing for about a minute until it faded away into hollow groans.

"I was afraid to go into the village alone, but when the French returned I went with them. We found horribly mutilated bodies everywhere. Hundreds lay dead beneath the wreckage. Many were still alive, pinned by blocks of masonry or squirming in agony with a leg or arm blown off. Not a man escaped destruction or mortal hurt."

This awful carnage meant the retreat of the German line from Varennes, but one of the prettiest villages in France is in ruins.

"SAPPERS" MOST IMPORTANT IN WAR

Stuttgart, Germany, via Amsterdam, Dec. 12.—"Our progress is slow but sure," declared the Emperor William in a speech at the headquarters of the Wurtemburg Sappers, as reported by the Tagblatt. The emperor, accompanied by the Crown Prince, reviewed the Sappers, and declared in a congratulatory speech that "without sappers there would be no progress made in the present war." Both the Kaiser and the Crown Prince wore new uniforms.

HORROR OF LIFE IN THE TRENCHES

Wounded "Tommy" Describes Conditions Under Which Men Fight.

(By Alfred R. C. Figes.)

London, Dec. 11.—Private A. G. Morton of the Berkshire regiment is a handsome and intelligent lad not a month more than 18 years old. He had been wounded in the leg at the battle of the Aisne and a few hours prior to his starting once more for the trenches he gave me a graphic account of his experiences.

"We were lying in our trenches along the Aisne, getting it red hot from the Germans," he said. "From a hill in the distance their guns were pouring a deadly fire on us and it seemed as if it would never cease. We saw white puffs of smoke rise against the gray sky, then great shells burst around us or screamed overhead.

Felt Like Screaming.

The din was enough to drive one clean out of one's mind; more than once I felt like screaming. Do not think I was frightened, for I wasn't, but still I didn't feel as high spirited as my comrades; perhaps it was because I am only a youngster. Since I have been back in England I have read accounts of soldiers singing and playing in the trenches. These reports may be true, but I very much doubt it.

French Sodden With Blood.

"The trench I was in was sodden with rain and blood—terrible!—still we didn't get much time to think of gruesome things. We just had to load and let fly at the intrenched Germans as fast as we could. It would have been fatal to show one's head above the ground level, for the Germans had crack shots to deal with the men who did that. For hours at a stretch we fired unceasingly, thinking the battle would never end.

"When the fight seemed at its hottest we were commanded to cease firing. The Germans then swarmed out of the trenches and were joined by others, who crowded over the brow of the hill. They all came on in a gray mass.

Laugh at Slaughter.

"Suddenly there emerged from a wood behind us a number of Scots Grays, who drew their swords and spurred their horses to the charge. They took the Germans completely by surprise and cut right through the ranks, mowing down on either side with their heavy swords. It was a brilliant piece of work and we laughed to see the Germans scatter.

"Then the Grays calmly rode back, with not a man among them lost, although some were slightly wounded. To see them return as coolly as if they had been out for morning exercise was an inspiring spectacle. As soon as the war is over I'm for a cavalry regiment.

"As I lay in the trenches I was struck in the face more than once by bits of flying clothing, and I shuddered as I knew they were fragments of uniforms of comrades blown to pieces by shells. A sharpnel burst right above us, and my comrades beside me were killed, while I was wounded. One notable fact is that the bullet is so hot when it enters the flesh that it immediately cauterizes the wound, which begins to heal, and that accounts for the fact that some soldiers do not discover they are wounded until some time afterward.

"An officer, finding I was wounded, told me to leave the trench and take cover in a barn, so I began to crawl toward it, dragging my coat and kit with me, but I felt that I could hardly move, for the wound was extremely painful. When I was about halfway toward the barn another officer called me away and ordered me to a little cottage about a mile in the rear of the battle.

Khaki Spattered With Blood.

"I felt too exhausted to drag my kit and coat with me, so crawled on without them. A few moments after I left the spot a shell burst over them, blowing them to smithereens, and that would have been my fate had I lingered there.

"As I crawled toward the cottage, a company of Highlanders swung past with bayonets fixed. They looked grim fellows, but I shuddered when I saw the khaki gaiters they wear were spattered with blood, and I knew they had done some of their bayonet charging.

"When I reached the cottage I found it was fully furnished, and I dragged myself upstairs to a bedroom where I found three comrades, also wounded. For three days we remained in that cottage, with only three biscuits and half a tin of bully beef between us, while a terrific battle raged all around.

Doesn't Want to Go Back.

"On the third day, the day we were found by some Red Cross nurses, we heard sounds downstairs and suspecting the presence of Germans were well on the alert. One of my chums, who was wounded in the arm, crept down to investigate and found in the cellar a Belgian family, and with them a cow. When the poor wretches found we were British 'tommies' they gave us a pail of milk from the cow, and it was grand!

"Do I want to go back to the trenches? No! But don't think me a coward for saying so, for to return to them is to return to hell; no pen and no tongue can fully describe the horrors, and I don't want to go back, for I've done my share."

PAPER PUBLISHED AT FIGHTING LINE

Paris, Dec. 12.—"The Echo of the Argonne" is the title of a new French periodical edited from the trenches in the depths of the Argonne forest where the French and the Germans have disputed the ground yard by yard for more than three months. It makes its debut with the announcement of a successful skirmish in which the "blue devils," the chasseurs, defeated the Germans once more in the Haussy forest, tells of the victory of the Russians in Poland and the progress of the allies in the north. The leading article, double leaded and in fat face type, announced the forthcoming distribution of 14,000 briar pipes in the trenches.

EMPLOYMENT ON NORMAL BASIS

London, Dec. 12.—There is now less unemployment among male workers than there was before the war, due largely to the vacancies created in the industrial ranks by those who have joined the fighting forces. But there has been a very great increase of unemployment among women. In London alone 10,406 registered with the Central Body in the last four months as needing employment. In the same period last year only 586 were registered. Among dressmakers, milliners, laundresses and charwomen, distress is keenest. For the relief of unemployed workwomen twenty-two workrooms have been opened in as many London boroughs and they are under the control of the Central Unemployed Body. It is estimated that the cost of running them will be $500,000 a year. Of this sum $320,000 will be provided out of the Queen's Fund the balance being met by grants from the local government boards.

SHIP HIRE BIG WAR COST ITEM

London, Dec. 12.—The scale of hire for vessels chartered by the British government for use as armed cruisers, troopships, hospital ships and other purposes has been drawn up by an admiralty sub-committee, and from these rates it is possible to make a rough calculation of the earnings in three months of some of the biggest vessels which are well-known in the Atlantic trade. They are as follows:

Vessel—	Earnings in 3 months.
Aquitania	$855,850
Caronia	308,400
Carmania	308,400
Cedric	315,000
Tunisian	158,640
Empress of Britain	241,500

In addition the government is recommended to pay the cost of preparing for vessels for state purposes, for time lost between end of charter period till restoration of the vessel in normal work and for higher wages.

CAPTAIN OF THE EMDEN GAVE HER A SHIP

Mrs. Gertrude Robinson believes that Captain Muller, commander of the German raiding cruiser Emden, is one of the greatest men of the world. She it was to whom he gave a vessel rather than sink it. She is the wife of the captain of the British freighter Kabinga, which left Calcutta September 19 with a cargo for Boston and New York. Twelve days later they fell in with the Emden, which fired a shot across the freighter's bow. She stopped, and Captain Muller sent officers to take charge. For several days the Kabinga was held while the Emden was busy taking other British vessels.

Finally Captain Muller decided to sink the vessel—he had sunk several in sight of the Kabinga. But when he learned Mrs. Robinson was on board he sent word that the captain might consider the vessel sunk so far as he had the owners were concerned, and that he would make a present of it to her. However, when her husband brought the vessel into Boston Mrs. Robinson made no claim. She turned it over to the owners just as if nothing had happened.

WHAT CAUSES COLDS?

This question and "How to Prevent Colds" is asked a thousand times every day. A cold is really a fever, not always caused by the weather but due to a disordered condition of the blood or lack of important food-elements. In changing seasons fat-foods are essential because they distribute heat by enriching the blood and so render the body better able to withstand the varying elements.

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