

GERMANS CONSCRIPT 8000 GIRLS OF LILLE

Terror Held Hearts of Inhabitants Four Years—Many Tales of Horror Revealed to Deliverers—Russian Prisoners Treated Like Dogs

By PHILIP GIBBS

Special Cable to Evening Public Ledger.
Copyright, 1918, by New York Times Co.
With the British Armies in France, Oct. 21.

To go into Lille was as good as anything that can come to a man who had seen four years of war, and I am glad that I have lived to see the liberation of that city. I saw the joy of thousands of people who during all those four years have suffered tragic things, unforgettable outrages to their liberty and spirit, and have dwelt under a dark sky of fear and want, waited month after month, year after year, with a faith that sometimes weakened, but never died, for the rescue that has now come to them.

It seems a miracle to them, now that it has come suddenly, and they fill their streets like people in a dream, hugging the gladness, yet almost afraid that it is real, and that they will again to find the swarms of field gray men about them and guns in their gardens and the German law hard upon them. I went into Lille Friday morning very early, but the streets were already thronged with people, with well-dressed women and children, and men of all ages in black coats such as one sees outside the war zone, and never before this within such close sound of the guns.

Gratitude to Deliverers

They filled their arms in great embraces of gratitude and love for those who have helped to rescue them from their bondage, and I saw the joy of vast crowds, and the light in thousands of eyes was like sunlight about one, and in a few hours one hundred made of friends who thrust gifts into one's hands in utter simplicity and truth, and thanked one poor individual as though he were all the army and had done this thing alone.

It was overwhelming and uplifting. Before one had gone far up the first avenue of Lille one was surrounded by a great crowd. A lady went through the throng, clasping both hands, said: "I embrace you for the gladness you have brought us."

She kissed one on both cheeks and it was the signal for general embraces. Pretty girls came forward and offered their cheeks, and small boys pushed through to kiss the men who had given so much. One girl, who was the living lady who waited on them, and now freighted things without flinching.

Because of their courage the treatment of British officers was much better than that of the men, and especially when they were dead did they give up the trouble to give them military honors. For the living men who were private soldiers this imprisonment was torture.

"I looked into young faces," said the clergyman, "and thought, 'I shall be called to bury you in a day or two.'"

French women smuggled bread to them at great risk of imprisonment, and sometimes old German Landsturm whom they met turned their heads away and declared: "This is dissolution ordered."

The old and disabled were tended by Sisters of Charity and French ladies who waited on them, and now freighted things without flinching.

One does not wish at this stage of the war to stir up passion and desire for revenge. God knows there is no need of that, but these things must be written in history, and I write them now, knowing their truth. In the city of Lille I have heard a thousand things of tragedy, even in one day's visit.

When the Emperor Came

In thousands of the people there are thousands of other memories. One scene that was described to me had the German Emperor as its central character.

He came to Lille in April last, when the German offensive in Flanders was in full force and they had taken Kemmel.

From 6 in the morning until 2:15 in the afternoon the men were drawn up in the streets, awaiting the ones who symbolized the might of German arms and is now bearing the burden of all its crimes. When he passed at last on his way to Kemmel there was only one company of German soldiers who cheered him with enthusiasm. "Hoch! Hoch!" All others maintained dead silence, and the Kaiser passed down their lines with gloomy looks on his way to Kemmel Hill.

Those were the worst days for the people of Lille, and during the last offensive in Flanders, when the British lost Armentières and Kemmel and the British army was but a thin line, holding back the tide.

"We gave ourselves up for lost," said one of the people told me. "It seemed that all our faith and all our patience had been vain. We cried out to God in despair, but that lasted only a little while. We started to march again and said: 'The German and English cannot be beaten. We must win in the end!' And your men helped us. Our prisoners were brought through our streets, muddy, exhausted, and covered with mud, and we have people in England who will be glad to hear after all this time that the clergyman and the housekeeper and the car have survived the ordeal of war."

I wonder if any of the sentries in the trenches in Armentières ever established spiritual contact with that city full of human yearnings as he stared over the parapet and saw through the mists the tall chimneys of Lille. Women lay awake, as they told me today, and cried out: "The English come!"

Children wept themselves to sleep as their mothers told me this morning, because another day had passed and the English had not come.

"We had no long to wait for you, very long," said many of these people today.

Conscripted 8000 Girls

After the first terror of the German occupation and the first nagging of law which regulated all their lives, forced them to be out of their streets, a week ago this evening, and shut them up in their houses like naughty children at 2 in the afternoon when the German commandant was annoyed with some complaint, one of their wives was buried in the ground, just before Easter, 1918, 8000 young women of Lille were forcibly seized and sent away to work in the fields, hundreds of miles from their homes.

It was a reign of terror for every girl in Lille and for their parents. Different quarters in the town were chosen for the conscription of girls, and machine guns were pointed eastward, and when the girls were ordered to gather in doorways, when the German officers came around and made arbitrary choices, saying to one girl, "You," and to another, "You," and then ordered their men to take them.

Mr. Moore, a surgeon, told me that several girls whom he knew were dragged out of their beds and carried screaming away. They were girls in all conditions of life, and a young one whom I met today told me that she was chosen, but escaped by threatening to kill herself rather than go, for it was her fear of misery and horror to any girl of decent instincts.

One of them who was taken and spent six months in this forced labor, told me that she had no chance of linen all that time and slept on a mass of straw in an old barn, at least with men who went into the same barn with them and then only with women.

They never had enough to eat in the early days, though the food was better later, and many of these girls fell ill from hunger, and their brothers, who were also taken, told me that their parents that their labor should not be given to the Allies.

"I went when my poor boy was taken," said a lady this morning. He was only fourteen, and such a child in his heart.

"They were ladies with backs

BRUGES GAY AS ALLIES ENTER CITY

Burgers Raise Their Hats and Sing "It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary"

People Cheer Belgian Cavalry and the Old Bell Adds Its Peals to Joyous Acclaim

By PHILIP GIBBS

Continued from Page One

were because their hearts had overbrimmed.

Robbed Little of Machinery

Not more than two years ago a German commander visited Lille and all the machinery was removed from the great textile factories which made the wealth of the city. With that Robauts and Tourcoing, millions of pounds' worth of machinery was taken, and what could not be taken was smashed. It was a deliberate plan to kill the industry of Ostend and other liberated Belgian cities is German.

"They tore the paper off my wall to light their fires," said Count von den Steen.

"They forced our young girls to work in the fields," said a Flemish lady.

"They stole everything," said hundreds of people.

"There is hardly a man in Bruges who is not poor in prison," said the old Burgomaster, Vizart de Bocarmé.

"They are pigs," said a young man.

But above all this flame of indignation there was gladness, because the evil spell had been broken that very morning.

We found a band of Belgians with a swarm of boys like flies on our car, and as we drove they sang patriotic songs and the crowds cheered again. I stood while a group of old burghers raised their hats and sang: "It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary" from the mouth of the bell tower, and the people who had spent the years of labor at enormous cost for the purposes of their submarine warfare.

Ostend was their main submarine base, and they built enormous workshops and sheds in the basins and docks for the accommodation and repair of their underwater craft.

Then a few weeks ago the German forces at Ostend saw themselves threatened by the menace of the Allied advance, and prepared in desperate haste for flight. Their real panic began on October 1, when they began an orgy of destruction and robbery of the works on which they had spent the years of labor to pride and race.

That was one of the worst tragedies of war. It is inevitable among war's horrors and pitiful. Let us forget these things in our general joy, though they will be remembered with shame.

But we do let them forget that while many cities are being larger and are full of gladness, the British soldiers to whom this is largely due are still fighting German gunfire and machine-gun bullets.

British Still Fighting

The Royal Air Service, as it was then, before the amalgamation into the Royal Air Force, did a great deal to sustain these ambitions by ceaseless bombing.

Removed Machinery

But for all that there was still a mass of valuable machinery in the works and on October 1 gangs of German marines were employed to remove it and to destroy what they could not get away. For two days this activity went on, while large numbers of troops were evacuated from the town and only rear guard were left.

On October 2, when front there was an attack at 2 o'clock Sunday morning and a number of prisoners and machine guns were taken. Around St. Python, southwest of Valenciennes, there was hard fighting.

The village of St. Python was subjected to a German capture of Blankenberghe, Zedelgem and Kruke, which today gives back all of the coast up to the Dutch frontier. The Germans have lost their last chance of naval success, and their dream of gaining the channel ports of France has been shattered, like many other false dreams which for a little while seemed in touch with reality.

British Hurry For Retreat

Meanwhile, southward on the British front the troops continue, not without hard fighting, to hasten the enemy retreat from the big cities long held in bondage. They are now well beyond Tournai and Roubaix, those two big manufacturing towns so closely linked up with Lille. They were the east gateways to France and had been a state of excitement and depression with the consciousness of defeat.

The last German soldiers remained in Bruges until the early hours of Saturday morning and forty-six of them were billeted at a convent near Assebroek, a suburb of Bruges until 1:30 or 2 o'clock.

I went there to see an English lady who had been living with these nuns since the beginning of the war, when, like them, she was caught by the German invasion. When I came into the garden I seemed an apparition to her, because the Germans had gone such a short time ago. Her cry of astonishment brought all the nuns into the garden, in their black and white dresses,

No News From Outside World

They had suffered miserable things, these ladies of charity, who had not even the means to buy bread during the war. Their food had been poor and scarce and they were surrounded by the roar of gunfire and bombs and had narrowly escaped death not once or twice, but many times.

When the British airmen used to bomb the dock of Bruges almost every Saturday morning, the people of the town were frightened and 200 civilians in and around Bruges were killed by bomb splinters and anti-aircraft shells.

Not once in all those four years did any man or woman in Bruges get any news of the outside world, nor any letter from a relative or friend, nor any knowledge of life or death among those they loved outside.

It was hard to bear. Their many tragedies I cannot write of now, but the remembrance of these things was drowned in the flood of joy overwhelming the people of Bruges. Queen Mary, who was a widow, was deeply moved by the sight of the Queen and Queenie, who were so closely pressed by cheering crowds, eager to kiss them and to kiss their hands that they could hardly move.

At Lille I was told by distinguished citizens that seven out of every ten men between 18 and 45 years of age or older for refusing to pay fines or for other crimes against German oppression." In Tournai it was as bad, and Mr. Richardson, the manufacturer whom I have mentioned, was actually taken as a hostage and imprisoned six weeks in Germany for the fantastic reason that the French had shelled Alex-

Treated Russians Like Dogs

Worse even than the treatment of British prisoners was that of the Russians. "Oh, they were treated like dogs," said one girl, and many other people told me so.

Two hundred and forty Russian soldiers were buried in Lille, but 2000 Germans lie buried there, too.

"Once when I was burying three of our men," said Mr. Moore, "a German pastor was burying seventy-six of his own soldiers. The number of their dead appalled them, and as year by year the numbers increased, they had no end and no outcry, even though pogroms were signed, and gloom took possession of them all. The most arrogant changed their tone, and in these last days it was easy to see defeat written on the German faces, and in every one of them made no secret of it."

The pastor, a doctor who was friendly with a young German who had a English mother and was a nice fellow, and it was he who brought tidings of strange things about to happen.

It was past midnight on September 30 that the doctor heard a ringing at his door, and he ran down, frightened by a sudden summons like that was always frightening, and opened the door and saw the German officers came around and made arbitrary choices, saying to one girl, "You," and to another, "You," and then ordered their men to take them.

"What are you doing at this hour?" he asked. The young German was white and haggard.

"I must tell you a strange secret," he said, and a whisper. "I promised you to know when to leave in Lille were abandoned by us and there was risk of bombardment. That time has come. Tonight 15,000 men are leaving Lille and is a little while it will be evacuated."

It was past midnight on September 30 that the doctor heard a ringing at his door, and he ran down, frightened by a sudden summons like that was always frightening, and opened the door and saw the German officers came around and made arbitrary choices, saying to one girl, "You," and to another, "You," and then ordered their men to take them.

"What are you doing at this hour?" he asked. The young German was white and haggard.

"I must tell you a strange secret," he said, and a whisper. "I promised you to know when to leave in Lille were abandoned by us and there was risk of bombardment. That time has come. Tonight 15,000 men are leaving Lille and is a little while it will be evacuated."

It was past midnight on September 30 that the doctor heard a ringing at his door, and he ran down, frightened by a sudden summons like that was always frightening, and opened the door and saw the German officers came around and made arbitrary choices, saying to one girl, "You," and to another, "You," and then ordered their men to take them.

"What are you doing at this hour?" he asked. The young German was white and haggard.

"I must tell you a strange secret," he said, and a whisper. "I promised you to know when to leave in Lille were abandoned by us and there was risk of bombardment. That time has come. Tonight 15,000 men are leaving Lille and is a little while it will be evacuated."

It was past midnight on September 30 that the doctor heard a ringing at his door, and he ran down, frightened by a sudden summons like that was always frightening, and opened the door and saw the German officers came around and made arbitrary choices, saying to one girl, "You," and to another, "You," and then ordered their men to take them.

"What are you doing at this hour?" he asked. The young German was white and haggard.

"I must tell you a strange secret," he said, and a whisper. "I promised you to know when to leave in Lille were abandoned by us and there was risk of bombardment. That time has come. Tonight 15,000 men are leaving Lille and is a little while it will be evacuated."

It was past midnight on September 30 that the doctor heard a ringing at his door, and he ran down, frightened by a sudden summons like that was always frightening, and opened the door and saw the German officers came around and made arbitrary choices, saying to one girl, "You," and to another, "You," and then ordered their men to take them.

"What are you doing at this hour?" he asked. The young German was white and haggard.

"I must tell you a strange secret," he said, and a whisper. "I promised you to know when to leave in Lille were abandoned by us and there was risk of bombardment. That time has come. Tonight 15,000 men are leaving Lille and is a little while it will be evacuated."

It was past midnight on September 30 that the doctor heard a ringing at his door, and he ran down, frightened by a sudden summons like that was always frightening, and opened the door and saw the German officers came around and made arbitrary choices, saying to one girl, "You," and to another, "You," and then ordered their men to take them.

"What are you doing at this hour?" he asked. The young German was white and haggard.

"I must tell you a strange secret," he said, and a whisper. "I promised you to know when to leave in Lille were abandoned by us and there was risk of bombardment. That time has come. Tonight 15,000 men are leaving Lille and is a little while it will be evacuated."

It was past midnight on September 30 that the doctor heard a ringing at his door, and he ran down, frightened by a sudden summons like that was always frightening, and opened the door and saw the German officers came around and made arbitrary choices, saying to one girl, "You," and to another, "You," and then ordered their men to take them.

"What are you doing at this hour?" he asked. The young German was white and haggard.

"I must tell you a strange secret," he said, and a whisper. "I promised you to know when to leave in Lille were abandoned by us and there was risk of bombardment. That time has come. Tonight 15,000 men are leaving Lille and is a little while it will be evacuated."

It was past midnight on September 30 that the doctor heard a ringing at his door, and he ran down, frightened by a sudden summons like that was always frightening, and opened the door and saw the German officers came around and made arbitrary choices, saying to one girl, "You," and to another, "You," and then ordered their men to take them.

"What are you doing at this hour?" he asked. The young German was white and haggard.

"I must tell you a strange secret," he said, and a whisper. "I promised you to know when to leave in Lille were abandoned by us and there was risk of bombardment. That time has come. Tonight 15,000 men are leaving Lille and is a little while it will be evacuated."

It was past midnight on September 30 that the doctor heard a ringing at his door, and he ran down