

A CHRONICLE OF UNPARALLELED INFAMIES.

AN OPEN LETTER TO DR. PAUL CARUS.

SIR,—Various articles from your pen have appeared in *The Open Court* defending the action of Germany and the German armies in regard to the inception and conduct of the present war. You have alleged that this terrible conflict was brought about by Great Britain, upon whom lies the guilt; and that the excesses imputed to German troops either were not committed by them, or were grossly exaggerated, or were only such as usually accompany the armed struggles of nations. You have asserted that it was the Belgians who first committed atrocities upon the Germans, and that the severities exercised by the latter were justifiable retaliations for wanton outrages against the gentle and humane invaders of a little country whose integrity they were pledged to maintain.

You have, I presume, by this time received and read the Report of the commission formed by the British Government, and presided over by Lord Bryce, for the purpose of investigating the excesses alleged to have been committed by the troops of your Fatherland. I would particularly call your attention to the Appendix to this Report, in which the carefully sifted evidence of over five hundred witnesses appears in detail.

It is almost inconceivable that any one after reading this Report should continue to believe that on the outbreak of the war an orgy of purposeless crime was begun by the Belgian people. Consider the improbability of such a thing. Before the entry of the Germans into Belgium orders had been given in every town, village and district of that country that all arms were to be delivered up to the authorities. The evidence shows that these orders were faithfully complied with. Even had the civilian population been armed, what could they have done to stem the advance of the great and highly disciplined German forces? Do you suppose the Belgian civilians were not aware of their helplessness, and of the folly of committing outrages

which were certain to be promptly avenged? Or do you believe that in the frenzy of despair they actually did commit shocking cruelties? Had they done so, a generous foe would have dealt leniently with them; certainly he would not have avenged himself upon innocent children. In any case the fact of the official order to deliver up arms and the compliance therewith show that no forcible resistance by non-combatants was sanctioned or contemplated. The evidence proves that none took place.

The Report contains many statements that the reckless—or, shall we say, accidental?—firing of shots by drunken German soldiers was sometimes believed to mean that they were being attacked. Had this been the case, the attacks must have been made by Belgian troops, not by civilians, whose assertions that they were unarmed bear every mark of veracity. You consider that these civilian attacks—which do not appear to have taken place—justify the ferocious cruelties committed by the German soldiery upon the non-combatant population. I do not think any one who can weigh evidence will agree with you.

More than this: it is stated in several of the depositions that German soldiers themselves on some occasions fired shots with the obvious and deliberate intention of having an excuse for the massacre of civilians. They are alleged to have gone into empty houses, fired shots, and raised the cry that non-combatants had begun an attack. The accusation of shooting became a stock phrase, repeated on numberless occasions, without a moment's inquiry into its truth, and resulting in the violent death of many persons who were absolutely innocent of the charge.

German soldiers were very frequently seen to throw small discs or other substances into houses which at once burst into flames. Into these burning houses soldiers and civilians, some dead, some still living, were cast; in one instance a man was held in the flames till his head and arms were roasted. I beg you to notice that, as these acts were committed during the first few weeks of the war, such inflammable materials must have been prepared beforehand. *The German troops left their own country provided with the means for the deliberate commission of cruel outrages.*

Have you formed an opinion of the incident of the child of two years who, while standing in the street at Malines, was transfixed by a brave German soldier with his bayonet and carried off on the weapon, a song on the lips of its murderer? What can you say of the public violation of fifteen women in the square of Liège in the presence of and begun by officers? You will, I trust, dis-

approve of the appalling savagery deposed to by witnesses *a33*, *d118*, *d133*, and, above all, *d86*. These incidents are so horrible that it must have needed some resolution to print the accounts; but there are hundreds of others nearly as bad.

As your culture is not exclusively German, you may find it difficult to believe that these horrors actually took place. The evidence goes to show that they give but a faint and blurred impression of the reality.

You will, perhaps, agree with me that cruelty—deliberate, cold-blooded cruelty, unprovoked by the individuals against whom it is manifested—is one of the foulest of all human vices. The alleged cruelty of the Belgians revolts you. Does not the infinitely greater cruelty of your countrymen revolt you? Are you not ashamed of the base and cowardly lies by which they have sought to excuse it? You cannot, I think, approve the implication that massacre by Germans is quite legitimate, but that every retaliation is a monstrous outrage upon them. Throughout the war it has been evident that Germany wants to have things entirely her own way. According to the investigations which have been made the charges brought against the Belgians are false, the charges against the Germans are true. Although a German you will probably be able to appreciate the distinction. You cannot be so little-minded as to think that crimes committed by your friends are for that reason less reprehensible than crimes committed against them.

Apart from the ethical standpoint from which I have tried to consider these outrages, one is deeply impressed by their astounding folly. For the moment they, no doubt, succeeded in terrorizing the civil population of Belgium—that is, they broke the spirit of helpless people who never even tried to resist—but they inspired the Belgian army to fight on with the courage of despair. That army has lost everything but honor. Germany has not lost her honor, because it is doubtful whether she ever had any honor to lose.

The German atrocities have produced the same stiffening effect on France, Great Britain, and the other nations which are painfully rolling back the tide of barbarism. They feel that, if civilization is to go on, this arrogant, bloodthirsty race—a race essentially savage, though with a thick smear of mechanical culture—must be effectually subdued. Should the Germans be victorious, they will have earned the undying scorn of the civilized world. In the event of their being defeated, they will have reason to regret the outrages in which they have so fatuously indulged. They will have rendered themselves liable to the most terrible punishment, the most ghastly

reprisals. Their foes may be little inclined to be merciful, and it will be simply a question for the Allies to say how far their magnanimity shall extend.

The German army is a very brave army—when it knows that it is the stronger. Allow me to recall to you one or two instances of German heroism. One section of the Appendix to the Bryce Report is devoted to evidence which proves that the Germans made a practice of using civilians, frequently women and children, as screens to intercept or avert the fire of the enemy. Thirty-six eye-witnesses, nearly half of them British, testify to the facts, and in several cases it is stated that the British or Belgian force retreated for fear of killing the unhappy civilians, thus leaving the Germans with a military advantage which was probably not unnoticed in their official reports. On one occasion the British rapidly swung their guns round and attacked the German flank. "The Germans then bolted, leaving the civilians behind." If you consider that your compatriots have kept within the usages of war, you will, no doubt, be able to produce some authority in military law or practice in justification of this characteristic maneuver: as a former German officer, you must be in a position to appreciate its prudence and ingenuity.

The Appendix contains a score of testimonies (fifteen of them British) to the abuse by German troops of the white flag. This abuse usually took the form of a pretended surrender, followed by a murderous fire, in which many British and Belgians were slain. So frequently was the trick repeated that the touching faith of the British in German "honor" impresses me rather as culpable credulity. That faith has doubtless become weaker by this time. But I would again call your attention to the unmanly cowardice and the unaccountable stupidity of the German proceeding. Having been a Saxon officer yourself (and we deem the Saxons to be honorable foes), you will admit that nothing revolts a soldier more than base and contemptible trickery, nor is anything more calculated to arouse an unholy thirst for vengeance.

I trust you will carefully read the sections of the Appendix relating to massacres by the Germans of wounded enemies, firing on hospitals and stretcher-bearers, and abuses of the Red Cross. Of these eighty-five examples are given, and after reading them it seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that the charges are fairly proved. That conclusion is greatly strengthened by the evidence of the Germans themselves. Copies or extracts of half-a-dozen military proclamations, and extracts from thirty-five diaries found

on dead or captured German soldiers, show clearly that the treatment of the Belgians by the invaders was excessively and unreasonably severe. In this connection I may add, on the authority of an article by Professor J. H. Morgan in the *Nineteenth Century* for June, that in the diary of a German non-commissioned officer the writer states his belief that the German officers invented the stories of Belgian and French atrocities in order to prevent their men from surrendering.

You will now, I venture to hope, follow the example of Dr. F. C. Conybeare, on whose mistaken admissions you have relied. For your own sake you should publicly withdraw your charges against the innocent, and transfer them to the guilty. You owe an apology to the Belgian people whom you have slandered. You did not originate the slanders; you have merely shown a strange gullibility in giving them currency. Examine the evidence with care; do not ferret out minor defects in the testimony and ignore its real weight; be man enough to rise above national bias and petty evasions; speak the truth without fear or favor. Yet a sentence in your magazine for May last is not calculated to make one hopeful. One despairs of the mentality of a man who can write so choice an absurdity as this: "God is neutral; but I am convinced that, being impartial, he will stand by Germany in spite of the odds that count against her."

CHARLES T. GORHAM.

IN REPLY TO MR. CHARLES T. GORHAM.

The present war, so terrible, so sanguinary, so useless and unnecessary, has caused much discussion and disrupted many international friendships. I fully appreciate, therefore, the regret which you express at the difference in our opinions, and I wish sincerely that we might come to an agreement on the war, its causes and the facts of its history. I have honestly and impartially tried to understand its origin and to obtain the most reliable information, and although I have my doubts in many important details, I have arrived at definite convictions in all main points; and considering the tremendous importance of the issues I have deemed it my duty to express my views openly and submit them to public criticism, irrespective of approval or condemnation. And I promise to retract publicly any statement of mine the erroneousness of which can now or in the future be proved.

You are so firmly convinced of the truth of your position regarding the war that you do not understand how I can support such a "chronicle of unparalleled infamies"; but I assure you it is after

a careful investigation made in an impartial spirit that I say that this terrible conflict was brought about by Great Britain.

Germany in the past has repeatedly kept peace when bitterly provoked, and once again did she endeavor to do so. She could have no motive for going to war with the formidable combination that is ranged against her. The German government and also the German Emperor personally did their utmost to avoid the war, both with Russia and with England; and it was above all England that cut off every chance of peace and forced Germany to break Belgian neutrality.

You must be very unfair not to concede that the mere possibility of a hostile invasion through Belgium imposed upon Germany the imperative duty of anticipating the attack. The equivocal attitude of Sir Edward Grey would have made the preservation of Belgian neutrality a criminal neglect of self-defense at the most dangerous point and in a most dangerous moment. Germany knew that Belgium was prepared as an ally of France and England, not otherwise; and later events have proved that Germany's suspicion was but too well justified.

Further, I still assert that "the Belgians first committed atrocities upon the Germans and that the severities exercised by the latter were justifiable measures against wanton outrages."

I never spoke of the invaders as "gentle" or "humane"; war is always terrible, and I feel sorry for the people in whose country it has to be waged. War always brings suffering and sorrow in its train. That is the reason why Germany tried to avert a conflict. But once war was inevitable I do not blame the German government for having endeavored to keep invaders out of Germany and not waiting patiently until an Anglo-French army broke into the Rhenish provinces in the rear of the German troops as the latter marched into France through Lorraine.

I felt very sorry for the Belgians, but I cannot help thinking that they had only themselves to blame, provoking, as they did, a German attack. Their government had adopted a mistaken policy, and they reaped what they sowed. If there is any other nation they can reasonably blame, it is Great Britain alone. Sir Edward Grey could have saved Belgium from the fate she met if he had honestly tried to keep peace with Germany. But he did not mean to. All his acts are inexplicable and stupid except on the principle, which seems to be his one actuating motive, *Germania est delenda*.

I have read the report of the commission formed by the British government for the purpose of investigating the excesses alleged

to have been committed by the Germans, but I deem it a partisan statement cleverly composed to give the impression that the Germans are barbarians who delight in the most atrocious cruelties. The evidence of the witnesses in Lord Bryce's report does not seem to me to have been carefully sifted, and if the alleged atrocities are true how is it possible that a group of American reporters traveled all across Belgium in vain in search of witnesses and failed to discover one iota of proof?—Nothing but the just punishment meted out, after due trial by court martial, for criminal acts committed by the populace! No, I cannot discover a trace of these unparalleled infamies in spite of Lord Bryce's and other reports.

I am impressed with the fact that you rely on fictitious statements. You do not seem to know that, for instance, in Louvaine the armed resistance of the populace had been carefully prepared and instigated, of which fact the German authorities are in possession of unequivocal proof in the form of written orders as to the distribution of arms, and lists of names. The story that the struggle in the streets began through "reckless or accidental firing of shots by drunken German soldiers" is a fairy tale which flatly contradicts even the Belgian descriptions of the fight and has been invented for the benefit of those friends of the Allies in France and England who have no clear conception of the situation, for the purpose of prejudicing them against Germany. Any one who can weigh evidence will not agree with you.

I hope you will excuse me for not having "formed an opinion on the incident of the child of two years who, while standing in the street at Malines, was transfixed by a brave German soldier with his bayonet and carried off on the weapon, a song on the lips of its murderer." I have formed no opinion on the story except that I regard it as fiction.

Your logic is simple. You come to the conclusion that "the charges brought against the Belgians are false, the charges against the Germans are true." But what do you say of the murder and persecution of Germans in the streets of Paris, Antwerp, Milan, also in London and other British cities, and in Canada? What do you say about the price set upon the heads of Germans in South Africa, to be paid to natives? What do you say about the atrocities of English soldiers? There is a rough element everywhere, but I know that the German army is made up of more humane elements than any other body of soldiers.

I hope that Great Britain will adopt the German military system, for I would expect from it a great improvement in the British

military forces and also the spread of a peaceful spirit in English policy. Germany is the best prepared for war, and at the same time the most peaceful in spirit, for the Germans must fight their wars themselves. Every mother must send her own sons into the field.

I would have done anything in my power to prevent the war, and I read with hearty approval the Kaiser's letters to his cousins on the Russian and English thrones. The Kaiser was especially loath to begin a war with the English people to whom he felt so closely bound not only by ties of friendship but also of blood; and I can understand his feeling in the matter. I love the English language, the English literature, the English people; and I hate the thought that the English people have done a grievous wrong. My only comfort consists in the sad consolation that the English people have been betrayed into this stupid attitude toward Germany by a small clique whose leader is Sir Edward Grey.

My sympathy goes out for the English commoners, for the Saxon element of the people, not for the aristocracy nor the men of Norman blood, for I blame the latter for all the misunderstandings and misrepresentations. In the interest of the latter Great Britain is governed, and the latter continue to contrive falsehoods to perpetuate their power and influence. I have always taken offense at Tennyson's wrongly admired estimate of "Norman blood" in the lines

"Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood."

I am convinced that Saxon blood is better than Norman blood, and that the Saxon element of the English people is their better portion and nobler inheritance. I have an antipathy against the crimes, in English history, of those ruling classes who have always, as a matter of course, followed the policy of keeping the great masses of the people in subjection and poverty while they themselves kept the land and appropriated all the power and the sources of wealth.

I fear this war will have to be fought out to the bitter end, and it becomes more and more evident that the English aristocracy will be the losers in the long run. Germany, in her progress in the arts of peace, became a danger to the English ruling classes, and a war seemed to be the only means of getting rid of the inconvenient rival. But I venture to predict that this war will bring about precisely what the English aristocracy, headed by Sir Edward Grey, expected to prevent.

Sir Edward Grey is smart, very smart, and in this war Great Britain has all the odds in her favor. The Triple Entente was a

cunning contrivance, and it furnished her with most powerful allies. Yet I predict a final defeat for the allied arms. For too much smartness defeats itself. The British world power is a colossus on clay feet, and these clay feet will crumble when the testing time comes. But out of the misfortunes and chaos of war I look for a regeneration of England, through the noble old Saxondom of her people, the commoners, the true Englishmen. The time will come when this truth will be understood, but at present the outlook is gloomy. Sir Edward Grey has led the people in a course of action which will prove their undoing.

There are a few men in England who take the same view as I, but they are few, very few, and they have no opportunity to make themselves heard. To force them into submission or compel them to retract their statements may prevent reform under present circumstances, but the truth will finally prevail.

We stand before a great crisis in history. England has forced the issue, for she wants to prevent Germany from sharing in the blessings of world power. England would not give up her monopoly of the seas. She wants to preserve the balance of power on the continent so that she may continue her dominion. That is why she misrepresents Germans and calls them Huns and barbarians. She wants to break Germany's power, but it becomes more and more apparent that not Germany's but England's fate lies in the balance, and indications are many that history is pronouncing on England her *mene tekel*. You do not believe me, but the future will judge between us; the future will reveal the truth.

I love the Germanic peoples. I admire Germany, England and the United States. My ideal has been and still is the establishment of a friendship between these three great nations, and in their alliance I see the hope of mankind, the realization of universal peace among men. But this hope has been well-nigh shattered because of the machinations of a few English diplomats whose policy it is to perpetuate the aristocratic spirit of the British government to the detriment of both Germany and the United States. We want leadership of the most powerful, but freedom for all, and the *sine qua non* of freedom for all is the freedom of the seas. Misrepresentation plays a considerable role in diplomacy, and the British diplomats have succeeded in making a powerful use of it, above all in misguiding the English people and leading them into this most disastrous war. But misrepresentations will be cleared away like fog in the morning sun, and in the end truth will prevail.

The time will come when the English people will long for

truth; I hope they will have enough moral strength left to search for it with honest endeavor, and that they will find it.

Is William the Second to be the liberator of England from the Norman yoke, the one whose task it is to undo the sorry work of William the Conqueror?

War is terrible, and it is the English diplomats that are responsible for the present one. They felt so certain of the outcome but they have made most careless and inexcusable miscalculations. They thought it would be easy to crush Germany, and they still build great hopes upon their misstatements and misrepresentations.

Misrepresentations, if believed in, are often very efficient and do great harm to the misrepresented party, but only for a time. In the long run they are found out and recoil on their inventors. The English people are patient and long-suffering and believe misstatements easily, but they will at last discover that their diplomats have relied on falsehood and have done a grievous wrong in misrepresenting the German cause. The members of the British cabinet, a clique of noblemen, are an incapable and narrowminded lot, and had not the slightest idea of the terrible task with which they were confronting the English people.

The war is being carried on in a most bungling way by the Allies, especially by the Russians and the English. The best and most worthy among the Allies are, it appears, the French; but even they would be incapable of withstanding the German attack alone.

One thing becomes plainer and plainer: that England will lose her leadership in commerce and world politics, and it is characteristic that in the present war England has once again forced the issue. But it is England herself that is going to be the sufferer; she will lose her place among the nations, and world-leadership will fall to Germany and the United States.

It will take some time before the English people realize this, for they still believe all the reports of German viciousness, of which the alleged atrocities in Belgium are only a minor portion. It will take some time for the English people to wake up, and it seems as if only a serious and terrible defeat in war would open their eyes.

Let us hope that the worst evils carry in them the seeds of some good, of some great good, and that the evils are fraught with blessings beyond what even the most sanguine dreamer expects. The misfortune that brings about the much needed reform and a thorough regeneration of England would be a blessing: it would accomplish more good than evil.