

POOR BELGIUM.

BY THE EDITOR.

WAR is terrible, and all our compassion goes out to the poor sufferers, especially to the poor Belgians who, we are told, are innocent and have been dragged into the fray against their will. Indeed, England declared war for the ostensible reason that Germany had broken the neutrality of Belgian territory. In fact much of the objection commonly brought against Germany is based on this same ground, and the German chancellor himself expressed his hesitation at violating Belgian neutrality and condemned the act as being an infringement of international law. At the same time, however, he declared that the Germans were forced to cross the Belgian frontier because they had positive and definitely reliable evidence that France intended to cross that country and attack them in the rear by entering the Rhenish provinces.

Before the war began it was known that French officers were in Belgium in collusion with the Belgians. Soon afterwards it became known that the English general, Lord Kitchener, had been in Belgium shortly before the war for the purpose of conferring with the Belgian authorities and to look over the field to inform himself concerning the best ways of arranging military operations.

Subsequent events have justified Germany's action, for it becomes more and more apparent that the Belgians had broken their neutrality with both France and England long before Germany crossed the Belgian frontier. So Belgium has forfeited the right to have its neutrality respected, and we must point out here that the case is even worse for Belgium. The Belgian people showed a hostility which presupposes a widespread propaganda against Germany, for civilians were trained to act as *francs tireurs* and many German soldiers became the prey of snipers. Why did not the Luxemburg people act in the same way? Why did *they* behave like peaceful citizens? They did not like the invasion either, but they did not prove assassins. The Duchess of Luxemburg was satisfied

with a simple protest against the German breach of neutrality and as a result Luxemburg was treated well by the invaders, no punishment of snipers, no destruction of property occurred. Luxemburg was to the Germans like a friendly country, and Germany paid an indemnity for trespassing on its territory. The people have suffered no more by the war than other neutral countries like Holland and Denmark that experience a general depression of business.

The Germans had offered Belgium to respect private property if the citizens would abstain from violence, but they preferred war to the utmost and, in spite of repeated warnings, the civilians used treachery in addition to the resistance of the army in open battle.

Was it necessary to carry warfare to this extreme? Was it advisable and does this procedure not presuppose that the government encouraged the heinous spirit of this savage resistance? Yea it is known that arms and ammunition were distributed by official agents, and orders in writing were found which had been sent out to prominent citizens to act as leaders in the insidious fight at Louvain to be undertaken simultaneously with a sortie from Antwerp.

All this has justified this breach of neutrality and has proved that the Belgian people are not so innocent as it appeared in the beginning to outsiders. Things proved even worse for the allied nations and especially for the English, when the Germans discovered in the state archives at Brussels documents which prove that the allies, both the French and English, had planned to pass through Belgium and cooperate with the Belgians since 1906.

It is known that the Triple Entente had been made against Germany, but it is now known that detailed arrangements had been made, how, where and from what points in cooperation with Belgium, Germany should be attacked. The papers quote the following report from the German general headquarters:

“German military authorities, searching the archives of the Belgian general staff at Brussels, discovered a portfolio inscribed ‘English Intervention in Belgium,’ which contains some important documents.

“One of these is a report to the Belgian minister of war dated April 10, 1906, which gives the result of detailed negotiations between the chief of the Belgian general staff and the British military attaché at Brussels, Lieutenant Colonel Bernardiston.

“This plan is of English origin and was sanctioned by Lieutenant General Sir James M. Grierson, chief of the British general staff. It sets forth the strength and formation and designates land-

ing places for an expeditionary force of 100,000 men. Continuing it gives the details of a plan for the Belgian general staff to transport, feed and find quarters for their men in Belgium and provides for Belgian interpreters.

"The landing places designated are Dunkirk, Calais and Boulogne.

"Another confidential communication declares that the British government, after the destruction of the German navy, would send supplies and provisions by way of Antwerp. There is also the suggestion from the English military attaché that a Belgian system of espionage be organized in the Prussian Rhine land.

"A second document is a map showing the strategic positions of the French army and demonstrating the existence of a Franco-Belgian agreement. A third is a report from Baron Greindl, Belgian minister at Berlin, to the Belgian foreign office, dated December 23, 1911."

When the account of these documents was received by wireless at Washington, the German ambassador there pointed out the significance of the documents in these comments:

"This telegram proves the German contention that the allies did not intend to respect Belgian neutrality. It even proves more, namely, that Belgian neutrality practically did not exist, and that the Belgian government was conspiring with the allies against Germany.

"Notwithstanding the denials coming from French sources, it is a fact that French prisoners were taken at Liège and at Namur, who acknowledged that they had been in those fortresses before the German troops entered Belgium.

"On the French side it has been asserted that the German chancellor in Parliament had acknowledged that Germany was doing wrong in violating Belgian neutrality. It must not be overlooked, however, that the chancellor further said:

"We know that the allies do not intend to respect Belgian neutrality, and Germany, in the position she is in, attacked from three sides, cannot wait, while the allies can wait."

"At that time the Belgian archives were not at the disposal of the German government. If the chancellor had known at the time he made his speech that Belgium was not neutral he would certainly have spoken of the alleged Belgian neutrality in a different way.

"Germany has violated the frontiers of no really neutral country, whilst the allies are on record for disregarding all obligations toward China."

Further developments indicate that England has tried to enlist other small countries, Holland, Denmark and Norway, in the same cause of joining the Triple Entente on the basis of secret alliances, so as to encircle Germany with enemies on every corner and make her doom sure.

The question has often been asked whether England would have declared war on France, if later on during her war with Germany France had violated Belgian neutrality and had crossed Belgium to attack Germany in her Rhenish province, and all who have proposed it, among them the representative labor leader of England, have denied it. But Sir Edward Grey comes out and affirms that he would actually have done so. We must confess that we do not believe it, and add that after having concluded the Triple Entente such an act would have been extremely ignoble. The Triple Entente was made to strengthen the back of France in case of war with Germany, and if France in her dire emergency, as would probably have come about, had tried to save herself by a bold advance through Belgium, would England have forgotten her former treaty and have helped Germany to crush France, England's ally? No, Sir Edward, you are not quite so mean as you now represent yourself in order to excuse a foolish move of yours and prop up a statement that is poorly argued. You ought to have declared war because England had entered into the Triple Entente. That would have been the true reason and you would have remained honest. Your actual declaration only proves that your statements are not reliable, that you care for effect and not for truth.

I will not discuss here the much disputed accusation of either the Belgian or the German atrocities. I deem it firmly established that the Belgians acted as snipers and *francs tireurs* and also that the Germans dealt out punishment according to the rules of war.

The English pretend to stand on a higher plane of civilization; they declared war for a moral reason. How much the English sense of morality has progressed in the last century may be seen from a statement which we quote from the *Independent* of Monday, October 12, 1914, p. 58:

"August 24, 1814. The British burn the capitol and the White House at Washington.

"August 27, 1914. The British denounce the burning of Louvain as an act of vandalism.

"Verily the world do move."

It becomes more and more conclusive that England has been the main motive spirit that has brought the hostile forces together

and has directed them against Germany. At the same time the press has been gained to spread a prejudice against Germany and German militarism, as if Germany were the enemy of freedom and humanitarian ideals.

It is so easy to denounce militarism and misrepresent it in caricatures, and this has been done with premeditated circumsppection. It is easy to prejudice those who do not know that militarism is simply a method of self-defense—a defense which is not the resistance of the savage, but a systematized and methodically adjusted defense of the country in which every man has to take the gun in hand and join the army to keep the enemy from his home. That is all that militarism is. The wrong militarism which shows itself sometimes in excesses or in a display of bravado naturally will occur, but it is certainly least noticeable in Germany, where it has been severely criticized by the *Reichstag* in the discussion of the Zabern affair. The German people will deal with it themselves, and there is no need to make it the excuse for a war.

At the beginning of the war it seemed as if Germany would not be able to stand the overwhelming onslaught of her powerful foes. But against all the expectations of her enemies Germany has developed a vigor far more tremendous than seemed possible. The people rose in all their might in a holy zeal of patriotism, and German intelligence has proved that its inventive genius is not limited to specialties in science and in art, but can be applied also to warfare.

A wave of grand enthusiasm is sweeping over Germany. I have at hand many evidences in letters which express a truly noble patriotism, not jingoism nor the narrow sentiment of a wrong militarism nor a drunken desire for fame or aggrandizement, but a determination to defend the German home against the Russ and the Gaul and to punish the Briton for having instigated the war. One writes: "We have been sleeping and were not aware that our very existence was endangered. We must defend our lives, our homes, the best and dearest we have with sword in hand, and it is grand to see the willingness of all, of high and humble, to sacrifice everything for our country, our goods, our very lives, our all. Oh! it is grand to see that our people have wakened from their slumber, all selfishness is sunk in zeal for the fatherland and it is worth living now to take part in this great upheaval. What a pity, that you are not here to witness the scenes in which the spirit of our people manifests its greatness! Such a people can not be conquered! Our enemies will have to slay every man in the country

to beat us, yea and the women too. It is no empty phrase when we say 'God with us.' The Kaiser has become dear to us, not because he wears a crown, but because he leads us in the right way and represents the people properly. Even the Social Democrats, who are very numerous in Germany, the enemies of monarchical institutions, have forgotten their antipathy, because the Kaiser stands for Germany. There may be no merit in this attitude of the German people, as it is simply a matter of necessity, for our grandmothers still remembered the *Franzosenseit* (the age of the Napoleonic wars) with its horrors, and we know what a victory of France and Russia would mean. We must fight, we must conquer, and we will conquer or die to the last man."

Another letter speaks in similar terms. It comes from a scholar of high repute. He says, "My son Ernst has been called to the colors and I am proud that the fatherland needs him. He may fall in battle and, since he is my only son, it will break my life, mine as well as his mother's, but I shall not regret the sacrifice because I know it is necessary. He is anxious to serve his country in the hour of danger, and far be it from me to wish to keep him away." A short time afterward I received the sad news that Ernst had fallen in the battle of the Vosges, and the poor parents are mourning his death the more as the young man had attained the highest degree of a scientific university education, and his death is not merely a loss to his parents who were rightly proud of him, but a loss to mankind, for there is no doubt that he would have done valuable work in scientific thought and invention.

A third letter contains the sentence: "It is a blessing to live now. We know that there is something higher than we ourselves for which it is worth while to die." Still another friend of mine writes about the disappointment of his two sons who have both been rejected from the army on account of slight bodily defects. One has a crippled toe which disables him for prolonged marches and the other suffers from some other slight ailment. Both young men have offered their services again, and the second one has been told in case they could use him they would let him know, but at present there was no chance to make use of his services because they were overcrowded with applications.

Through all communications from Germany there runs the same note of confidence that, whatever difficulties are still to be overcome and whatever sacrifices it may cost, all Germans are animated by the same spirit; they would rather die to the last man

than yield. They feel the justice of their cause and are mainly bitter against the English as the instigators of the war.

The institution of universal service in the army was not commonly endorsed in Germany before, but now there is no voice raised against it. On the contrary the people declare unanimously: "If we did not have universal military service where would we be now? Our enemies would fall upon us and make us suffer as they have done before; but now that we have an efficient army they find us well prepared to hold our own even though we are greatly outnumbered by our aggressors."

In reading all these communications, I have the feeling that Germany is like Samson at the moment when he heard the announcement, "The Philistines are upon thee," and the spirit of the Lord descended upon him filling him with superhuman strength. The Germans did not want the war under these most unfavorable conditions. Germany stood for peace; German militarism exists only for self-defense, and self-defense has never been more difficult than now when the Triple Entente has closed its grip and is acting in premeditated cooperation.

Germany's love of peace is unquestionable and shows itself in the hesitation of the Kaiser to mobilize the army and to declare war, as becomes evident in his correspondence with the Czar as well as with King George. If he had been anxious to gain laurels in battle or to enlarge the boundaries of the fatherland he would have selected a more favorable opportunity when he could attack his enemies singly.

The *Dagbladet* of Christiania has published in its issue of September 13 an essay of Hanris Aal who stands up for Germany and insists on the honesty and peaceful spirit of the Kaiser. He betrays the little-known secret, for which he claims to have good evidence, that during the Boer war the Czar proposed to the Kaiser to attack Great Britain and reduce her to a second-class power. While the Kaiser sympathized with the Boers he did not take advantage of England's helpless state. The same author points out that if German militarism had ever meant hostility to puissant neighbors the Kaiser would certainly have fallen upon Russia when the victorious Japanese took Port Arthur and the Muscovite throne was tottering because of the revolutionary movement which followed the defeat. Both England and Russia have proved ungrateful, and Professor Aal insists that Germany is now acting in pure self-defense, and her cause is just.

It is strange that not all outsiders understand the situation,

and that Germany, the victim of the Triple Entente, is blamed for what is commonly called militarism, while the Kaiser who has always, and even in the present instance, proved his love of peace, is often denounced as being guilty of the war that has villainously been forced upon him.

Considering the fact that the military efficiency of Germany has been grossly misrepresented as brutality incarnate in the English-speaking world, especially in the United States and the British colonies, under the name of militarism, it seems that this journalistic activity is part of the scheme to isolate Germany and create a prejudice against her among the neutral nations. The scheme works with those who do not know Germany except through the English misrepresentations and caricatures; it will not work, however, with those who know Germany, Germany's social and military conditions, and Germany's recent history.

The English people themselves are becoming aware that the war was a great blunder. The Hon. Bertrand Russell, a savant of Cambridge University and a man of no mean judgment, speaking of the war in *The Nation* (London, Aug. 15, 1914) expresses his opinion thus:

"And all this madness, all this rage, all this flaming death of our civilization and our hopes, has been brought about because a set of official gentlemen, living luxurious lives, mostly stupid, and all without imagination or heart, have chosen that it should occur rather than that any one of them should suffer some infinitesimal rebuff to his country's pride."

Mr. Russell does not consider Germany free from blame, but he recognizes the viciousness of the anti-German propaganda that has been carried on in England. He says:

"For the past ten years, under the fostering care of the government and a portion of the press, a hatred of Germany has been cultivated and a fear of the German navy. I do not suggest that Germany has been guiltless; I do not deny that the crimes of Germany have been greater than our own. But I do say that whatever defensive measures were necessary should have been taken in a spirit of calm foresight, not in a wholly needless turmoil of panic and suspicion. It is this deliberately created panic and suspicion that produced the public opinion by which our participation in the war has been rendered possible."

Similar protests come from men of independent manhood and comprehensive insight, from the Right Honorable John Burns and other labor leaders. Mr. John Burns resigned his official position

with the famous John Morley and a third member of the cabinet because they did not want to share the responsibility for the crime of this war.

The political leaders of England, these men of the leisure class, ignorant of German strength, German vigor, German patriotism, German intelligence, and blind in their belief in English superiority as well as in their own omnipotence, overlook the fact that Great Britain can prosper only in peace, and that war can never strengthen their empire nor ever promote its prosperity. They thought it would be so easy to conquer Germany by having it attacked at the same time by Russia and by France while the British navy would ruin Germany's extended trade and cut off all resources that had to be procured over sea. They thought it was so easy to crush the Teuton armies and to ruin the industrial bloom of the Teuton dreamers. They forgot that Great Britain is a colossus on clay feet.

The English are not loved in the countries under their sway. How easily may the Boers renew their recent war, for they have by no means forgotten their old grudge. And is India really faithful to her English rulers? It would be difficult to find a Hindu who is thrilled with gratitude toward his British masters. If a rebellion breaks out in India it will be a terrible one, for the reduction of these teeming millions to patient obedience will be difficult.

But England has more weak points. Turkey may be drawn into the war at any moment and if that should come about, how will the English protect Egypt and the Suez Canal? Even Gibraltar is no longer safe since the new Krupp guns can destroy any fort or fortification, if they have only a place where their batteries can be built. So long as Spain remains neutral the most formidable British stronghold is sufficiently safe, but what would be Gibraltar's use if the Suez Canal were lost?

All these dangers lie still at a distance, but it was a sign of extreme shortsightedness on the part of the British government to risk England's position and her dominion over the world for the sake of ruining a rival nation whose navy is not as yet half as strong as England's, and of crushing a competitor whose trade is increasing from year to year but is still very far behind English commerce. Would it not have been wiser to keep step with German progress, to build better schools, to reform social conditions, and to learn from the Germans by imitating their progressiveness rather than by opening a war on them?

Well, we will not judge. Life is a struggle, and if the English

think that they must crush Germany before she becomes too powerful, they have a right to try to keep the upper hand according to their own notions. In former times the English fell upon Holland and took the rich Cape Colony without any provocation simply on account of their desire to own that country themselves. Why should they not succeed now in depriving Germany of her trade, her colonies and her power? If England succeeds, the war will be justified, but will England succeed? Sir Edward Grey may have made a miscalculation, and it seems to me that he actually displayed a lack of judgment that will brand him in the same way as other statesmen who deemed themselves so clever, so capable in intriguing and yet failed lamentably in the end.

Poor Belgium! Belgium was induced to sacrifice herself for England and France, but they left her in the lurch. She was encouraged to hold out and carry on the war to the bitter end. England and France gained time thereby to prepare for further resistance and to recruit more troops, but poor Belgium waited in vain for relief and hoped for help which did not come. Belgium had relied on English promises and had believed that Germany would break down under the attacks of many enemies. Her hope, her belief, her expectations remained unfulfilled. But who is to blame? Certainly not the Germans. Belgium did not hesitate to join with England, France and Russia to destroy them. The blame rests with the Belgian government and with her allies who failed to come to the rescue as they had promised.

The war has been forced upon Germany and was undertaken to cripple her power, her army and her navy—briefly called her militarism. If Germany's enemies are the losers in the fight, it is not the fault of Germany; the Germans did not want the war. The blame must be placed at the door of the allies.

Poor Belgium, thou hast been misled! Thou didst trust England and join the allies. Now thou reapest what thou hast sown, the doom of defeat.

But I must add, poor England! Her statesmen have taught her to hate the Germans and to begin a war against militarism, but now she is facing a most tremendous danger; she is facing the prospect of losing her primogeniture among the nations. She has been mistress of the seas and ruler of rich countries, of whole continents. Will she be able to keep in her hands the scepter which she has held as an iron rod over India and Africa?