GERMANS BURN DEAD IN GREAT BRICK KILNS

Tie Them Together in Bunches of Fours and Dump Them Into Raging Furnaces Formerly Used in Making Bricks at Charleroi.

London, Dec. 10—"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 is 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 50 years—has been the topic of conversation there 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 horrid 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 those 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 the 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 200-mile field. The general officers 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 field. They could hold the line. But there are some 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 look 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 the 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 mergin.

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 out 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 incandescant 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 stupified 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."

Yesterday I heard of a Cambridge man, 20 years old, who had taken honors in his class. His parents had pinched and striven to put him through his school. He went out with one of the London territorial regiments, tall, stalwart, handsome, the finest type of young Englishman. Two daye later he was shot through the body. It was 50 hours—50 hours—before the surgeons could get around to him. The grist of wounded had simply swamped them. In the 50th 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 unnameless 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 poor 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 roofs and their private rooms for doctors and nurses— and because there are too infinitely many woundmen —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 boards 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 men. 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?

TOWN BUILT ON LEDGES.

In It Was Located Wireless Station Of Roman Times.

The Wide World Magazine.

A few miles north of Marseilles and within easy walk of the tram to Aix-en-Provence, lies a typical provencal village that tourists usually miss. It was founded by the Romans during their occupation of the south of France, and is built in accordance with the custom of that time.

The houses appear to be perched on top of each other, but on closer inspection are found to be built on ledges on a hillside. This hill is the most interesting feature of the place. What appears as a solitary crag is in reality a castle, the rooms, fortifications, etc., being cut out of the solid rock and forming a fortress practically impregnable in those days. At the side of the castle is a round tower, about forty feet in height and seven feet in diameter.

The interior of this tower, acted as the "wireless station" in Roman times. It consisted of a series of pigeon lofts, from which the birds, bearing messages, were sent direct to Rome. The whole of the interior was constructed of a very hard cement, which with the wear of ages is now slowly decaying and one perfect "loft" now remains.

Old Forts and New

Sacramento Union.

One of the peculiar features of the war in Europe has been the discovery that the old-fashioned earthworks proved better able to resist the great shells of the Germans than the modern concrete and steel fortifications.

Among the forts at Antwerp was one old one which contained little concrete or steel, its chief defence system being massive earthen barriers. Into these piles of solid earth the big shells of the Germans sank only about a yard, while the newer forts they penetrated twice that distance.

It was also found that the damage caused by these shells was much less in the old than in the new forts. The explosion shattered the concrete in the new forts, while in the case of the earthworks its simply made a shallow hole.

It was found earlier in the campaign that the modern fort was of little value when attacked by modern artillery. A single big shell demolished one of the forts of Liege and the forts of Namur were wrecked by the giant projectiles with little delay.

On the other hand, intrenchments which sheltered strong forces of infantry, protected by artillery, have proved a hard problem for the armies of both the Germans and the allies.

In fact, the success of the French in preventing the Germans from invading France from the east has been due to the fact that the troops in the intrenchments along the hills have been able to keep the Germans away from the forts. In other words, the army has protected the forts.

It is not likely that the day of the fort has passed, but certainly no nation will be so foolish as to place its dependence on forts of steel and concrete. The main defense of the nations will be now, as always, not the castle and the fort but the men.

Many soldiers of the cross do not wear their uniforms outside the prayer meeting.

There are women who have yet to see the inside of their husband's pocketbooks.