





Class □ 639

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Within Seven Hours of London

281884



THE DIARY OF TWO FRENCH VICTIMS
By **HENRIETTE CELARIE**
TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY
MAUDE M.C. FFOULKES

*Cursed be your race, your wives, your children.
This was the despairing malediction of a
wretched woman, whose husband, son and daughter
had been dragged away into slavery by the Huns.*



Class _____

Book _____

SLAVES *of the* HUNS

The Experiences of Two
Girls of Lille

BY

HENRIETTE CELARIÉ

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY

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FOREWORD

IN order to ascertain the truth about an outrage, one must learn the facts directly from the victims. The following narrative possesses the merit of absolute candour. I have written it from details supplied to me by Yvonne X. and Marie Z.,* who were carried away into slavery by the Germans.

It is absolutely necessary to emphasize the word "*Slavery*," since none other will serve to demonstrate the unspeakable wrongs of which the enemy has been guilty.

After the atrocities perpetrated in Belgium and in our own invaded territory at the beginning of the war, we thought that "They" † could not devise any worse wickedness. But there was more to come. Their sinister

* For obvious reasons the Christian names and surnames of those mentioned in this book have been altered.

† "They" is the epithet usually employed by the Lilleois to designate the Germans.

FOREWORD

imagination was first to conceive, and then to carry out, the deportation of young girls.

Yvonne X. belongs to one of the most respected middle-class families in Lille. Her life, before the war, was perhaps slightly monotonous in its calm regularity. Each day had its appointed tasks, every hour was mapped out in household duties, church work, charitable pursuits, keeping up her various accomplishments, and enjoying the society of her friends.

It was from this quiet home life, a life which might be described as "narrow," certainly one lacking in external interests, but nevertheless a life endowed with an undoubted charm of aloofness, that the young girl was cruelly and suddenly snatched away.

The statements of the two déportées are given here in all their sad simplicity. I have partly transcribed their notes word by word, somewhat in the manner of an official report—"Things happened like this;" "*They* did this or that." I may be mistaken, but this impersonal element seems to convey a more accurate impression of what actually occurred than would have been obtained from a more highly-coloured narrative.

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

It seems desirable to state that the main reason for issuing this book is that British readers may understand exactly what German occupation of a country may involve. This appears all the more necessary now that we find from our police-court records that English girls are willing to be on terms of amity with enemy prisoners.

PART I

THE STORY OF YVONNE

SLAVES OF THE HUNS

CHAPTER I

THE MAIDEN TRIBUTE

"We shall commandeer the young girls"

IN accordance with their policy, whenever they were contemplating some fresh wickedness, the Germans at first acted quite openly about the deportation question. They announced, with lying hypocrisy several days before the actual blow fell, that, "owing to the blockade, the English had made it impossible for them to feed the civil population, and the military authorities must therefore call for voluntary workers to assist in the cultivation of the land."

Nobody came forward to offer their ser-

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vices, and, in consequence, von Gravenitz, the General-in-Command at Lille, issued a proclamation to the effect that the authorities were going to employ a number of civilians in non-military duties in certain parts of France away from the fighting line, at present in German occupation. Everyone was directed to have an outfit in readiness (not exceeding 30 kilogrammes in weight), comprising linen and cooking utensils, and, following these instructions, all civilians were forbidden to leave their homes, no matter upon what pretext, between the hours of eight in the evening and six the next morning. As this order was final, the population was advised to remain calm and to comply with the necessary requirements.

The state of mind of the Lilleois was indescribable. In vain Monsignor Charost, the Bishop of Lille, protested in a letter to von Gravenitz; in vain the Mayor, M. Delesalle, reminded him of the first German proclamation which guaranteed the inviola-

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bility of civilians—the German General sheltered himself behind “superior orders from the highest quarter.” Above all, he insisted that this decision had been arrived at “for the good of the population.”

It was then the middle of Holy Week. The far-seeing, who were looked upon as alarmists by the sceptical, began to prepare their outfits.

“Following their example I began to arrange my sister’s and my own, but as it was rumoured that the Germans were not going to take any steps on Easter Sunday or Easter Monday, I put off finishing the final preparations.

“In Lille our relations and friends spoke of nothing but the new German ‘frightfulness.’ I remember that on Easter Sunday, while we were eating our scanty dinner, I told my mother and my sister what a German soldier had said to one of our friends when he came to commandeer some household articles. ‘Soon,’ said he, speaking

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coarsely and defiantly, 'soon we shall commandeer the young girls.' But I did not think it possible that 'They' would ever take me, so I was still able to sleep peacefully."

It was the night of Easter Monday, 1916, a soft, fragrant spring night, the clear sky presaging a beautiful morrow, but ever since 2 a.m. those who lived in the Rue de Bourgogne (where the Colonel of the 64th resided) had been unable to sleep. Presently a car came to fetch the Colonel, who personally wished to superintend the abductions. Some officers—musicians—accompanied him. The rape was then conducted methodically, street by street, in that part of the town where Yvonne X. lived. At four o'clock it was nearly over.

"At this moment I awake with a start. Somebody is ringing the bell next door! Mamma, who shares my room, jumps to the foot of her bed: 'They are *here!*' The words are hardly out of her mouth

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when we hear the tramp of heavy boots and the rattle of muskets under our windows. Our bell rings furiously. Shall we refuse to open the door? Impossible! The Governor's order is, 'Open instantly to all Germans.' If anyone dare refuse, if even one dare to delay, if the slightest ill-feeling is shown—the result will be a fine or imprisonment.

“My mother goes downstairs. She is confronted by seven soldiers of the 64th. They are quite young men, slyly excited by the adventure of the night.”

Apropos of these youths, the Lilleois heard afterwards that no married soldiers or men of mature age wished to take part in the abductions. It was even rumoured that at the Café Bellevue, on the Grande Place, bitter quarrels (many followed by duels) had arisen between officers, certain of whom condemned whilst others upheld the iniquitous measure.

A non-commissioned officer accompanied

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the soldiers who had forced their way into Madame X.'s.

"He is a weak-looking little man with a short, fair moustache and the foppish appearance common to all German non-commissioned officers.

"He begins to speak, 'How many persons live here, madame?' 'Three—myself and my two daughters.'

"A soldier takes possession of the census paper, which it is now obligatory to have in the vestibule of every house. Then :

" 'Lead the way, madame.'

"But before mamma can stop him the Boche enters my bedroom. I am still in bed. The man addresses me :

" 'You are Mademoiselle'——'Yvonne,' says mamma anxiously. 'Mademoiselle, get up at once,' replies the soldier. 'An officer will be here in five minutes.'

"Having thus spoken, the man turns on his heels and goes towards the next room. He is just about to enter when Madame X.

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pushes him aside and knocks at the door. The man laughs—what a lot of fuss over a young girl! He recommences his interrogation: ‘You are Mademoiselle Geneviève? Get up at once.’

“Five minutes have hardly elapsed before the officer arrives. Ten men with fixed bayonets accompany him. The officer speaks French with some difficulty. One might perhaps suggest that he does not care about the business in hand. His face under his helmet is pale. He satisfies himself as to our identity. He goes on: ‘One of these two young ladies must prepare to follow us at once; she will be sent in the country.’

“I cry out, ‘Where to?’ The non-commissioned officer interrupts me: ‘Silence, This is an order.’”

French girls are certainly not well “disciplined.” Yvonne continues to protest with redoubled energy. The officer, who seems to be in a hurry, finishes by saying:

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"I don't care which of these two girls goes. One *must*. You can settle it between you."

"But the soldiers, who no doubt think I deserve severe punishment for daring to open my mouth, indicate me: 'You, you!' they cry.

"The officer makes a blue pencil mark at the side of my name: 'You can take thirty kilos of luggage. You will require a spoon, a fork, a tumbler, and a counterpane. You have just twenty minutes to make your preparations. The soldiers will wait for you, and—if you are *not* ready'—he makes a significant gesture—'you will be forcibly taken away.'"*

Yvonne X. hastens to dress. Her sister finishes her packing, her mother makes a cup of coffee, and tries to calm the impatient soldiers, who, long before the twenty minutes

* In the morning of this dreadful day, one of Yvonne X.'s friends picked up in the street a paper which had evidently fallen out of an officer's pocket. It ordered the bearer to "Act with violence, but avoid any scandal."

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are up, are rattling their muskets in the hall and calling out from the foot of the staircase :

“ Mademoiselle, quick, hurry up ! ”

Yvonne X. comes down. The supreme moment of parting has arrived. But hers is a Christian home.

“ Mamma blesses me, saying, ‘ Be brave, dear child ; try to help others who, like you, suffer.’ ”

“ We cling to each other, we kiss, but we part without shedding a tear ! ”

CHAPTER II

VIA DOLOROSA

THE door closes. Yvonne X. follows a soldier. The streets are deserted. The approaches to them are guarded. Suddenly at one of the turnings a confused grey mass looms sheep-like in the half-light. It is a company of the 64th who are waiting there.

“ I have to pass them. A succession of coarse jokes greets my appearance. ‘ Ach ! you’ve got hold of a nice little bit.’ My guide takes me into a yard belonging to a house where I find several women.”

Yvonne X. is soon joined by Lucille B., her neighbour and her friend. She has been brought by an awkward “ cafard ”* whom she has compelled to carry her umbrella

* “ Cafard ” is an untranslatable slang name given to the German soldiers at Lille.

VIA DOLOROSA

out of sheer bravado. Lucille is a tiny person, and her valise is heavy. Every ten steps she stops to rest. She has been torn from her father and mother, who are bedridden old people. She is terribly troubled. She begs to be released. At last she manages to speak to a lieutenant who takes her to a young puppy of an officer. She states her case. "My father is 84 years of age; my mother is 78. They are both bedridden—I take care of them."

"The young officer laughs. These considerations don't matter a jot to him, but he turns to another officer, and says, shrugging his shoulders, 'This girl looks ill; perhaps she won't be any good for work.' 'I look ill?' answers Lucille. 'Well, if I do, I am only what you have made me.' The officer hesitates a moment: 'You can go home,' he says.

"Lucille wants to say good-bye to me, but I beg her not to lose any time, lest the order for her release may be cancelled.

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“ In the yard the period of waiting seems interminable. The chill and damp of the hour before sunrise strike the unhappy women. They shiver.

“ A kind man offers me his basket for a seat. Near me is a quiet-looking girl. I speak to her. She is a lady’s maid, and she tells me that most of the women have been carried away from Tourcoing.

“ An hour passes. The young ‘ puppy ’ comes down the steps, mounts his horse, and gives the order to depart. They arrange us in rows. The soldiers surround us with fixed bayonets. The signal is given. It is daybreak ! The prisoners walk with difficulty, as the weight of their luggage hinders them. Some soldiers help the weakest and those who are most fatigued. The people in the streets seem stupefied. An old woman rushes forward and presses my hand. Others call from their window :

“ ‘ Courage, mademoiselle, courage ! ’

“ ‘ I shall not lack courage,’ I tell them.

VIA DOLOROSA

“ We are now taken a short distance to premises belonging to a building contractor. There are many captives—some few are men, but the majority are women. Among them is Mlle. de V., who has been carried off with her servant. Group after group of fresh arrivals! They must have taken the whole of our parish! I see little girls who have just ‘made’ their first communion, older girls who have attended special services with me, servants, small shopkeepers—all are there.

“ The captives are quiet and composed. ‘Just a little anxious,’ they say. But an occasional smile breaks over the set faces. A large fat woman arrives. She has put on her ‘Sunday best,’ her ‘rhabillure,’ as they say in the North of France. She wears a startling purple dress, and in a carpet bag, well tied with thick string, she has packed seven pairs of wooden shoes. Another woman has brought nearly all her kitchen utensils—saucepans, casseroles, coffee-mill,

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etc. The newcomers are young, or in the prime of life. The order has been given not to abduct girls under age. However, there are many who are not eighteen!

“About eight o'clock they arrange us in rows of four—the men in front, the women behind. The soldiers count us with scrupulous minuteness. Mlle. de V., her servant, the lady's maid, and myself walk side by side; we don't want to be separated.”

The prisoners go back up the Rue Colbert to the Place Catinat, there to take the tram to the railway station. The women advance, many stooping under their heavy luggage.

“But,” says Yvonne X., “we were all calm, we were quite brave; we saw many familiar and beloved faces, because our relations and our friends were already waiting for us, and they pressed eagerly forward trying to find those whom they sought.

“But what words can describe the terrible sufferings of the men who were forced to look at these poor women without being

VIA DOLOROSA

able to help them? They lifted their clenched fists to Heaven as if to implore assistance, their lips were set in agony, others wept the dreadful heartrending tears of old age. The parish priest comes. An imposing figure in his sombre soutane, he blesses each group as it passes: 'Benedicat vos, omnipotens Deus. Benedicat vos!'

"The 'déportés' now arrive inside the goods depot of the Saint Sauveur station. All the doors are guarded. Some chairs have been supplied by the Food Committee.

"At the entrance a member of the Committee slips a loaf of bread under our arms, as our hands are encumbered with luggage. Inside the depot we are given some coffee.

"In the great hall we number at least six hundred. I go from group to group. I am continually meeting with fresh surprises. A workman recognises me. 'You!' says he, 'you, our young lady who teaches the children on Sundays—they have taken you?'

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"The women's courage amazes the sentinels. 'What a strange thing! The girls don't appear one little bit unhappy!'

"However, certain of us, hopeful to obtain our freedom, manage to speak to the Major; but he has only one answer for all, no matter from whatever illnesses they say they are suffering: 'The country air will be good for you!' To those who tell him they do not know how to work in the fields, he replies, 'It isn't difficult; we'll soon teach you.'

"The station hall is now overcrowded and overheated. The strain is terrible. We got here at nine o'clock; they say we shall not leave before five. Where to? Where are we going? Probably to the Ardennes."

Sitting in a corner of my study Yvonne X. thought over the past, then she said to me:

"I'm not a heroine, so I implore you don't put me on a pedestal. I hesitated over what I believed to be my duty. If my greatest wish was to be free, I knew that I

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ought not to abandon my fellow-sufferers. Perhaps I could do a little good if I talked to some of them, because I know that many people derive consolation from knowing that they are not alone in their misery. However, I determined not to be forcibly abducted by the Germans without protesting. I owed that to my family and to myself.

“ ‘ Who is the person responsible for us ? ’ I ask, and I receive the answer, ‘ You must speak to Captain T.’

“ The man whom I propose to address is a hateful person, with long stilt-like legs, who looks like an inferior soldier-servant. His face is scarlet and swollen with rage ; he rushes about from side to side, whip in hand, insulting civilians, officers, and soldiers alike. In order to speak to him at all it is necessary to watch one’s opportunity—a pause between two fits of temper.

“ I wait, I wait a *very long time*. The propitious moment has at last arrived. I

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approach Captain T. I protest against my abduction. He takes my identification card, glances at it, and gives it back to me, saying, 'I can do nothing for you.' "

"My doom is sealed. But the municipal representatives, whose devotion is splendid, make another attempt. They implore the Captain to send us back to our families, but, as many prisoners have already been released, the Captain will not give way. He shakes his small head. He refuses.

"It is now five o'clock. The order for our departure is given. Counted over and over again by the soldiers, the captives move slowly along. The men go first. We form a little group, which consists of Mlle. de V., her servant, the lady's maid—whom I shall henceforth call Madeleine, Jeanne, Juliette—and myself. We have made up our minds to travel together if possible, as perhaps we shall be able to help one another.

"One of the municipal authorities, the good M. S., makes a last despairing effort :

VIA DOLOROSA

hoping that, as space is limited, we may be left behind, he tells us to wait until the last. But Captain T. is there! Most politely he comes up to where we are standing :

“ ‘ This way, young ladies! Plenty of room here ! ’

“ And as every carriage is now full, we are pushed into a truck outside which are chalked the words

“ ‘ EIGHTEEN WOMEN. ’ ”

CHAPTER III

LE CHEMIN DES DAMES.

“IT is a cattle-truck, fitted up with some benches inside ; the door is the sole opening ! The only step to it is so high that the women cannot possibly manage to climb in without assistance. The soldiers hoist them up one after another.

“ There are twenty-four prisoners—twenty women, four men. Three armed sentries of the 61st guard the entrance. They look at us with great curiosity, as if seeking to spy on our very thoughts. One of them who understands French listens to all that we say, and then repeats it to his comrades. Now there is another distribution of food by the Food Committee. We get a cake of soap, a loaf weighing a kilo, two hard-

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boiled eggs, a tiny piece of cheese, a little lard, and a red herring—scanty provisions, but all are served alike; and after having been meagrely rationed for many months, the prisoners thought that this supply was so liberal that they said among themselves:

“ ‘ We can’t be going to the Ardennes! They must be taking us much farther—perhaps to Germany? ’

“ A whistle sounds. The train moves. Until this moment the victims have only shown a quiet courage. But now their composure gives way. The young girls sob bitterly.

“ I rose from where I was sitting,” said Yvonne X., “ and I suggested that we should pray together and implore God to take care of us. The sentinels were silent. We recited the rosary.

“ Fresh courage seemed to inspire the unhappy women.

“ We now try to become better acquainted. The majority of my companions are servants, who appear to be worrying more over the

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troubles of their employers, left servantless at a moment's notice, than over their own predicament. I listen to their anxiety concerning the fate of their neighbours. 'Has so and so been seized?' and, again, 'Was "she" with them?'

"The Germans now join in the conversation. They seem to want to convince us that they were forced to obey orders, and that they had not willingly taken part in our abduction. 'We couldn't help ourselves.'

"And when a young girl's sobs break forth afresh, one of the soldiers bends over the little tear-stained face, saying, 'Don't cry, mademoiselle; it's much sadder for people in Germany.'

"His comrades venture a few encouraging remarks, 'It's nice country . . . very nice!'

"A fat woman who keeps a cabaret begins to mimic them, and makes fun of their scanty supper of bread and marmalade, saying, 'Nice marmalade . . . very nice!'

"The convoy travels slowly. At each

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stop the soldiers take orders. Apparently they, as well as the prisoners, are in complete ignorance of their destination. The night falls. It is cold. They shut the door, and in the darkness one sees the faint reddish glow of a nightlight. The captives, who have been dragged about ever since four in the morning, can hardly bear any more. And their fatigue seems worse, because they are obliged to sit in one position on the wooden benches. The atmosphere is stifling, too many human beings are packed in the cattle-truck. The soldiers smoke.

“Some of my companions manage at last to sleep—to forget! I envy them. There is no sleep for me, I have all the hours in which to think.”

Yvonne X. is not a child. She is nearly thirty. She is fully aware of her possible dangers. Certain scattered phrases have already enlightened her.

“They say they have not carried us off solely to work on the land.”

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“I can face death,” she thinks, “but there are some things worse than death.”

The convoy passes in the night. The wheels grate, the engine puffs noisily. Sudden jerks throw the unfortunate travellers upon each other. Oh, the long, unending night!

At last the sun emerges from wreaths of mist. The soldiers stretch themselves and fling open the door. The fine air of morning comes in little waves and revives the travellers. Where are they? Across the mist one sees rising ground planted with fir trees, *now* there are “shining heights”! It is the Ardennes! One can also discern “dim discovered spires,” the number of farms increases—in the meadows the cattle are grazing.

At twenty minutes past five the train stops; some officers who have come by car from Vervins are talking on the platform with an adjutant and a civilian who occupies the position of Mayor. The adjutant is a

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fat man, with greasy lint-white hair. He looks silly in his motor goggles. He calls a non-commissioned officer, who proceeds to read the roll-call.

“ But he gabbles so fast that none of our names seems to be mentioned. The Mayor comes to his assistance. They separate us. The men are taken to a disused factory which the Germans have stripped of everything portable. The women are left on the roadside. We are obliged to wait standing. Luckily it is fine. The sun gets warmer. Several women and children peer curiously at us through the hedges. We question them. ‘ Do you know what they are going to do with us here? ’ The women shrug their shoulders. ‘ Here! you won’t stop here. How can you live? There’s nothing left for you to eat.’

“ We still wait. O God, how tired I am! At last the rumour spreads that there is to be an examination. There is a house close by. I go there to obtain information.

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The Mayor is outside. I question him: 'Is it a medical examination?' 'I don't think so.' 'Are we going to be searched? Are they going to take away our gold and our small change?' 'Your gold! They certainly won't let you keep any of *that*.'

"I had brought a little gold with me to use where the communal system of Lille was not in operation. What shall I do? Happy thought! Sitting on my portmanteau, screened from the sentinels by my willing friends, I pack my gold pieces inside the red herring so generously given by the Food Committee. But I am deceived over the nature of the examination. It *is* a medical examination. The details which filter through to us fill us with horror and dismay; we have to pass in stark naked before the Major!

"I rush back to find the Mayor. 'Sir, I implore you, is there any possible means of avoiding this examination?' He gives a helpless shrug. 'The Germans are masters

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here, madame ; whatever they order us to do must be done.' ”

Yvonne X.'s repugnance to undergo the examination is indescribable. For the first time since she has left home she weeps. She goes back to her companions. They question one of the girls who has just been examined.

“ They pretend it's for our good, because we shall have to sleep two in a bed. Two women have already been found to be 'suspectes.' ”

However, the reiterated protests of the victims at last produced some effect. The Major was forced to yield in certain matters of propriety. “ When my turn came at noon,” says Yvonne X., “ everything was quite decently managed.”

The hours passed with leaden feet. The sun was burning, and after having suffered from the cold during the night the prisoners now suffered from the heat.

“ We are horribly dirty ; we make a rough

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and ready toilet under the pumps at the railway station, and then, sitting by the roadside, we eat the rest of our provisions. The Mayors of twelve districts subordinate to the Kommandantur have been summoned at three o'clock. We see them arrive in carts in which to take the luggage and those of us who are too tired to walk. They question us, they arrange us in groups, they are going to carry us away. Those captives who have been seized with their wives or their sisters can ask to go with them. I make a list of our six names. I beg the authorities not to separate us. We are, it seems, to be sent to a neighbouring village. But the Mayor agrees to keep us and another twenty prisoners (one of them the son of a doctor at Lille), and he proceeds to discuss the question of where we are to live.

“ During this time the adjutant finally satisfies himself as to our identities. This fat man is a perfect fool. He explains his

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meaning very slowly in broken French, making the most of every syllable.

“ ‘ Mestames, there is some'ting wrong, some'ting vary strange! You were two hundred twenty-eight women this morn. T'ree of you have gone to the isolation hospital. Two hundred twenty-eight less t'ree—that makes two hundred twenty-t'ree. Two ladies is lost! Where have they been lost? ’

“ He goes over it all again, he holds up two fingers, he rolls his spectacled eyes at the captives. Finally he resigns himself to the inevitable. He can't find the two lost ladies. He turns on his heels.

“ The Mayor, it seems, wishes us to lodge with Madame D., but she at once excuses herself. As if the proposition were a calamity, she raises imploring arms to heaven. She looks at the girls with angry, mistrustful eyes. The neighbours come running up, and a chorus of abuse of the Mayor is heard. He is responsible, according to them, for

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all the troubles of the occupation, and as the abuse falls thickly on the unfortunate man who cannot help himself, the prisoners, massed together, wait in pathetic silence whilst their fate is decided. Little by little they understand the reason for this terrible reception. By some refinement of cruelty the Germans had done their utmost to injure the captives before their arrival. They said, 'The women who are coming here are street girls.'

"But Madame D. has pity on us. She tells us she will not let us remain without a shelter for the night, and she takes us into a house used for ambulance stores.

"The house, untenanted since August, 1914, has little to recommend it. The surroundings are even less engaging. The garden is the common property of three adjoining houses, one of which, a 'maison tolérée,' is open all night to the soldiers.

"They help us to carry in the beds; then, very kindly, Madame D. asks us to

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come to supper with her. But we cannot forget our first welcome! We gratefully accept a bowl of delicious hot milk, the first milk we have tasted since the German occupation. Left to ourselves, we inspect our residence, feel the mattresses, examine the locks, then, worn out with fatigue and shattered with varying emotions, wrap ourselves in our coverlets and stretch ourselves on our beds. The night is calm, but next morning, when I rouse my companions and tell them that it is time to get up and go to B—— for early Mass, I see, looking at their grief-ravaged faces, that more have wept than have slept!”

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE HAMLET OF "MY FANCY."

THE hamlet where the prisoners are stranded is called "My Fancy"—what an irony of Fate! Composed of clean little white houses close to the station, it is about two miles distant from B—.

"We walk these two miles with Madame D. and her daughter, and, en route, Madame D. tells us her plans. She cannot take us in herself—she has not sufficient accommodation; but she means to see that we are properly cared for. She is going direct to the Kommandantur, where she is well known through her ambulance work. There, the adjutant tells her to do as she thinks best, and Madame D. asks him, 'What employment are you going to give these young

THE HAMLET OF "MY FANCY"

girls?' The adjutant replies, 'Oh! they can please themselves for the present; the Commandant is absent, and until his return I shan't require them.'"

The village girls, it appears, are quite capable of doing all the work, which consists in planting young cabbages under frames made of wood and glass taken from a manufactory in the country. So *here is yet another proof that the Germans were not driven by necessity to deport women for land labour.* It was merely done in order to inflict new sufferings on the civilian population, hoping to foment a rising which they could have brutally suppressed. The Lilleois actually often heard officers remark, "I wonder what we can do next to strain their endurance to breaking point."

"After a pleasant little lunch with Madame D.," says Yvonne X., "we are ready to accompany an assistant to the village, to settle the question of our food. Two only of us are required. My friends ask me to

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represent them, and henceforth to take the initiative in all questions which concern us ; that is the reason why the Germans afterwards nicknamed me The Chief. I go with Madeleine. On the way, chatting to the assistant, I understand that nobody is pleased at our arrival. Our help is not required—we are ‘ undesirables ’ !

“ ‘ Alas ! ’ sighs the assistant, ‘ we have had trouble enough with this immigration ; it’s a bad business, an enormous charge on the parish. ’ ”

The Germans had promised that, if necessary, their assistance could be relied upon about the revictualling. But their promises were—“ made in Germany.”

Yvonne X. was able to lay in a little store of provisions, including bread, and certain American goods—beans, coffee, cereals, and a small quantity of sugar. She had also a glorious windfall in the shape of a piece of fresh pork. A pig had met with an accidental death the evening before !

THE HAMLET OF "MY FANCY"

Back again at "My Fancy," the exiles began to try to settle down in their new home. It was a poor little house, badly knocked about with shellfire. All the panes of glass were broken. The empty framework was stuffed up with sacking. The kitchen, which was the first place the girls made for, was certainly damp. Its walls were covered with patches of mildew ; it opened into a tiny dining-room. On the first floor were two little bedrooms. Every room had a brick floor. The interior of the house was empty, save for a little cast-iron stove and a slender provision of wood, left there quite lately by those who had escaped from the village of Bourgogne. But the neighbours were now more charitably disposed. At the end of the day the prisoners found two pairs of sheets placed on the beds ; there were also a table, a sideboard, and six chairs. I had nearly forgotten to mention some casseroles, a bowl, and a good earthenware plate.

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It is a wonderful thing to think how quickly these brave little French girls adapted themselves to their altered circumstances.

“ Here we are settled in our new home,” Yvonne X. wrote to her mother ; “ to-night we shall take our first meal ‘ chez nous.’ We are so happy because we have not been separated—we pretend that we are all related ! Since the neighbours have realised that we are *not* ‘ street girls ’ they have been excessively kind. The number of our beds being insufficient, it is settled that Jeanne and Juliette shall sleep at Madame D.’s. She is a charming old lady, who renders us many little kindnesses. On the left of our house lives a ‘ fraudeuse.’* She drinks to excess at times, but she is really a very good sort. We looked upon her as an angel visitant when she came to see us, and said, ‘ You mustn’t be frightened, my children ; you can sleep here safely.’

* “ Fraudeuse ” or “ Fonceuse ” is a name given in the invaded districts to those sent across the frontier to be supplied with food in Belgium.

THE HAMLET OF "MY FANCY"

"On the right an old maid and her brother reside who have inherited a legacy from their employers, but as they are not used to their change of fortune they are more often to be found in their kitchen than in their drawing-room.

"The little old woman is very taciturn and not a bit demonstrative, but her actions speak louder than words. From time to time her sharp, wrinkled face peers in at our half-open door: 'It is only I; I've brought a little milk.'"

Yvonne X. takes out her purse, but the little old woman runs away, her peals of shrill laughter echoing for quite a long time.

"It will help to cook your rice," she says.

"The priest of B—— is full of goodwill towards us. The other day he made us breakfast with him in the presbytery. He wanted to hear all about us. When we have told him our hope of being repatriated to France or sent back to Lille, he shakes his head, 'Oh—the people of the North—the

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people of the North! My poor children, don't deceive yourselves, you are here for the duration of the war!

“ M. le Curé has also experienced some hardships. He was dragged behind the carts of the invaders for hours until he fell with fatigue; twice, out of sheer devilment, they pretended to shoot him. But all his gloomy predictions cannot damp our hopes, and, laden with books which he has lent us, we return to ‘My Fancy.’ Some fresh ‘déportés’ have just arrived from Lille; they tell us that the abductions are still going on, district by district, throughout the town.

“ Without showing the least consideration for the state of health of those who had been ordered for deportation, the German soldiers acted in a revolting manner. A young woman of thirty was dying; they were already preparing the linen for her burial, but the soldiers dragged her out of bed and carried her to the tram. What eventually became of the dying woman?

THE HAMLET OF "MY FANCY"

"The spirit of terror walked abroad in the town of Lille. We were told of cases where parents had gone mad after their daughters' abductions; we heard of a servant driven suddenly out of her mind through sheer fear of being deported. Luckily her employers managed to secure her in the Rue de Molinel; she was flying for her life, her eyes were wild, she was clad only in her nightgown, her feet were bare. We heard of one convoy who went into exile singing the 'Marseillaise,' as brave soldiers sing when going into battle; and although the National song was forbidden to be sung in the invaded regions, the Germans dared not order the girls who sang it to be silent.

"It was said—I suppose each of us shows his or her emotion in accordance with character or education—that there were some amusing incidents which made even the Lilleois laugh! In the populous district of Wazemmes, the *déportés* stuck their hats on the soldiers' bayonets, and marched away

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doing the goose-step. 'We are MEN,' they said.

"At the railway station a daring newspaper boy called out: 'Great victory at Lille! Fifteen hundred prisoners without losing a single man.'

"In the convoy of women who have just arrived one poor soul is very ill. Four soldiers take her to Mme. D., who, failing the doctor, is almost as good a physician herself.

"The unhappy woman is pregnant. She cannot speak. Mme. D. can only hear confused mutterings; she seems incapable even of thought. Her husband, who has been carried off with her, explains that her pitiable condition is due to the privations and sufferings which she has undergone at the hands of the Germans. His wife has been in this state ever since the beginning of her pregnancy! They make the sick woman as comfortable as possible; her husband remains with her. Five days later she gives birth to a dead child!"

CHAPTER V

LIFE OF THE PRISONERS.

AT "My Fancy" the prisoners practically lived by rule.

"Every morning we go to Mass, then we see to our household duties, which take a long time. It must be confessed that we have at first endless trouble in lighting the fire. We have only green wood; we have to learn how to saw it, then how to chop it; lastly, it has to be dried. It is such heavy work that, whenever we get the chance, we pick up odd bits of the stakes for the trenches which are manufactured at the railway, and use these for fuel. The little stove draws badly. One of us always has to watch the fire whilst another cooks. We have very few cooking utensils. It needs some ingenuity to prepare a meal. It re-

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quires more to vary the menu, our choice of food is so limited. However, we manage, after beating up the neighbourhood, to get a few mixed vegetables and some potatoes.

“The afternoon passes in really strenuous labour. Since everyone at ‘My Fancy’ tells us we are settled there for the duration of the war, we feel that we must be self-supporting. We can’t possibly sponge on our neighbours.”

Mme. D. places an allotment at the disposal of the young girls. They work with a will, digging, levelling the ground, raking it over, planting potatoes and sowing beans. Work is a blessed thing! The captives are not thrown on themselves, they have not time to dwell on the past or even to think about the future! Only sometimes, when evening falls and they are sitting in their little house, sad thoughts, like birds of ill omen, spread their black wings over them. When the time comes to say “Good night,” there is not one who does not feel something

LIFE OF THE PRISONERS

pull at her heartstrings when she remembers a thousand bitter-sweet memories of her lost home. It is the hour when the mothers of Northern France trace the Sign of the Cross upon their children's foreheads before they go to bed. Yvonne X. is the eldest prisoner.

“ I will take the place of the mothers,” says she, “ and every evening I will make the ‘ little cross.’ ”

“ Then we go upstairs ; at first I used to lock our door, but it is a useless precaution, since the windows are only stuffed up with sacking ! It is just like living in a mill ! The idea of building an attic never entered the head of the architect responsible for these dwellings. It is very easy to climb into any one of them.

“ In consequence, what agony, what fears ! The least noise makes the young girls start and sit up in bed, listening intently. Their hearts beat wildly.

“ Soldiers come out of the ‘ maison tolérée,’

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where they have passed some hours of debauchery. They stop. What are they going to do? A drunk man knocks at the door. Is the *unspeakable* thing about to happen? Long after the footsteps have died away, the poor children continue to tremble with fear. Nobody, except those who have experienced a similar fate, can really understand what they suffered. At last our nerves were shattered. When we managed to sleep, our slumber was not refreshing. Often in the night one of the sleepers shrieked aloud. Her friends jumped out of bed to see what ailed her. The girl awoke, terrified. 'I've had the nightmare—a *dreadful* nightmare,' she said.

"In order to account for our excessive excitement, it is necessary to explain that the Germans had fixed a large placard outside our door for every passer-by to look at and to read. On it was written in enormous letters :

'SIX WOMEN INSIDE.'

LIFE OF THE PRISONERS

And many times during the day the soldiers would come and stare at us. One morning a 'green devil' (that is the name given to the police in the occupied territory) reins in his horse outside our door, devours us with his eyes, and, in order to give some pretext for his visit, asks, 'Why haven't you any panes of glass in your windows?'

"Once I went home alone, as I had to prepare our food. It was very hot, and I was imprudent enough to leave the door open. A voice made me turn round. A soldier stood on the threshold. He tried to enter into conversation with me.

"Do I see to the cooking? Why are we still not working?"

"He had a curiously persistent way with him. I began to get nervous. To add to my troubles, a sudden storm broke, it poured with rain. 'I'm coming in, mademoiselle,' said the German.

"He entered, followed by another soldier whom I had not noticed. They settled them-

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selves on either side of the door. They had a most sinister appearance. By this time I was so terrified that I could not even try to escape. Luckily, Mme. D.'s daughter arrived and sent the Boches away. I was saved ! ”

One pays for such experiences ; it is not feasible to expect a weak girl who feels herself watched and hunted down every moment of the day to throw off such memories at will. For a long time after her release Yvonne X.'s face wore a curiously fierce expression—the expression of someone always on the defensive. One could not even mention this period of her slavery without seeing her tremble and turn pale, as if the very life-blood was ebbing from her heart.

CHAPTER VI

ARRIVAL OF THE COMMANDANT

“SUCH was our life when, one Tuesday morning, the rumour spread through the village that the Commandant had returned.”

Judging from the excitement which this produced, the prisoners were able to realise its importance. From various remarks which they had heard since their arrival they tried to form some idea of the Commandant's character.

“He has shown himself less rapacious than many of the Governors of our northern towns. The peasants have been allowed to keep their cows and poultry on condition that they supply enough milk to make cheese for the army. They have also to supply a certain number of eggs. [In Germany all

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is so well "ar-ra-n-ged" that cocks and hens are counted alike as "layers."*] But opinions are divided concerning the Commandant. Some say, 'He has a little French blood in his veins. He wishes the civilians to suffer the least during the occupation.' Others affirm, 'He is a German, and, like all Germans, he is soft spoken and false as hell.'

"Next day we are sent for to attend a new roll-call at two o'clock. Doubtless the Commandant wishes to take stock of us. This time there are many more, as some new déportés have doubled our original number."

At one o'clock the prisoners proceeded to B——. It was stormy weather. The sun is burning. "Vainly we try to find a little shade. The long walk is dreadful. A woman near her accouchement walks very, very slowly. An atmosphere of intense sadness surrounds these poor souls.

* Out of curiosity I quote these words from a notice circulated in a village in the Ardennes, commandeering "the *hens* of both sexes."

ARRIVAL OF THE COMMANDANT

“When we arrive at B—— the ‘emigrants’ (this is the name given us by the country people) who live in B—— are already waiting in the courtyard of the Town Hall. The non-commissioned officers, more punctilious than ever, are very busy. They run about shouting, ‘Men on one side, women on the other. Form up!’

“We look at our new companions. The first impression is dreadful. The rape, this time, has taken nearly all girls of loose morals. Yvonne X. and her friends can bear physical sufferings unmoved. Uncomplainingly they accept the hard tasks to which they have never been accustomed. They say to each other, ‘We, too, can suffer for our country.’ But the proximity of prostitutes outrages their sense of decency.

“The women will not even behave themselves with decency. They laugh loudly, they solicit the soldiers in the most disgusting manner. One, a girl who speaks Flemish, is especially odious.

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“ Fortunately, a car stops before the Kommandantur. The Commandant alights, looking as if he had been ‘ poured ’ into his ash-coloured uniform. Tall, alert, with iron-grey hair and a pleasant face, he hasn’t the appearance of an officer: he might well be the man of the world, the banker he used to be in civil life. He goes to and fro, shaking hands with one, chatting with the Major, a man of middle height, thin—or perhaps ‘ lean ’ best describes him—with a small blond bullet head, a palish complexion, and lobeless ears which look as if some mysterious illness had begun to eat them away.

“ The non-commissioned officers proceed with the roll-call, after which one of them, Weeks by name, turns stern eyes in our direction and commences to lecture us.

“ ‘ Mesdames—monsieurs. . . . Now is the time to talk of *work*. If you work willingly, you will be pleased with yourselves. If you work unwillingly, we shall

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put you in rows, and you will have to work just the same.'

"Having thus spoken, Weeks glances at the Commandant, who makes a sign of approval, and then scans our ranks."

His attention is arrested by Yvonne X. and her friend Mlle. de V., who are a head taller than their companions. He goes towards them, bows, scrutinises them from head to foot, and says with unaffected surprise :

"Mesdames, you seem totally unsuited for working on the land."

Then, brusquely, to hide his embarrassment :

"After all, we'd better arrange to put you with the gardener."

"He turns on his heels. The gardener approaches. He is a stunted little soldier, the hairs in his 'tufty' beard are as stiff as the spikes of the grass we call 'dog's grass.' He has hardly any teeth. They have been destroyed by a shot. He has

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run all the way in order to be punctual. His face streams with perspiration. His uniform is dirty and greasy. Utterly repugnant, he exudes a strong and acrid odour—the unmistakable, unforgettable smell of the Boche.

“ Suddenly I stand in front of Valentine (Simone de V.’s servant). This big, strong girl’s appearance is fatal. She seems to have been expressly created to cultivate the earth. Her fat cheeks are as red as tomatoes, her short sleeves show a pair of massive arms.

“ I face the man. He only knows a few words of French. ‘ How many are you ? ’ ‘ Six, but we are already employed. We are working for Mme. D. ’ ‘ Mme. D. ? Don’t know her. She isn’t in my notebook.’

“ He looks through his papers, and naturally he can’t find Mme. D.’s name. Her garden has not been commandeered. I persist.

“ ‘ We *are* working for her. Why, we’ve already planted the potatoes ! ’

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“ ‘ No, no, no, you’ve got to work for me.’

“ He shows me his notebook. On one page is written: ‘ Salat pflanzen.’ He makes me put down our names. Then he laboriously explains our duties.

“ ‘ You ’ (he indicates me with his pencil) ‘ and you ’ (pointing to Simone de V.) ‘ will stop at home to “ fabrikationen.” ’ With a gesture he imitates grinding coffee, which, apparently, with him constitutes household duties. ‘ The others, to-morrow, here, at 8 o’clock—German time.’

“ He deals with group after group in the same manner.

“ Among the captives are two young women whose approaching maternity is near at hand. Without showing the slightest consideration for their condition, the gardener proceeds to number them with the other toilers. It is only in the face of universal reprobation that he consents to grant them temporary exemption.”

CHAPTER VII

THE REFINEMENTS OF KULTUR

WE now come to one of the most dreadful episodes in this sad story. It is impossible to give it fully. Most of the victims of the deportations will hardly, for shame's sake, mention what they have gone through, much less allow their experiences to be published. On the subject, therefore, of the rapes of young girls, the world will only know a very little of what transpired.

“ Whilst the men are told to move a certain distance away, the women are directed to a house, formerly occupied by a lawyer, which the Germans have now almost denuded of furniture. The ground floor is a guard-room. The room where we are put is on the first

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floor. A chest and table have been left. A child's shoe and some dust-covered trinkets prove that the occupants of the house have left it in frantic haste.

“The room is small, the prisoners are literally ‘packed’ inside. The windows are destitute of blinds and curtains. The blazing sun beats down on the women. The air is stifling. The agonised prisoners ask each other, ‘What are they going to do to us now?’”

“A non-commissioned officer makes certain that all the victims are present. He then shuts the door, sits on the table, and stretches out his legs. ‘Mesdames, you are going to be medically examined. I know quite well that it is—not amusing, but no doubt some of you are accustomed to seeing the doctor. Those who give trouble will be removed to the guard-room and examined just the same. You will enter one at a time. The Major is waiting for you in the next room.’”

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“ These words fell in the midst of absolute silence, a silence almost like death itself.

“ We think of the degradation to which we must submit in a few minutes, and against which we are powerless. Then we give full vent to our indignation.

“ ‘ They ’ treat us like girls off the streets—an examination like that which they undergo, ugh !

“ The German soldier jeeringly proposes to take those who are making the greatest noise away at once to the guard-house.

“ ‘ With the rats, mesdemoiselles, with the rats ! ’

“ Then, very rudely, he tells us to be quiet. However, my friends and I let the others pass, hoping that a miracle may save us. But all precautions are taken. The staircase is guarded—every card is checked, it is impossible to escape. My turn comes. I enter the accursed room. The Major is wiping his hands. In one terrified hasty glance I see the sinister preparations—the

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table arranged—the pillows—two chairs to support the feet—at the side is a shining nickel basin and various instruments.

“ The Major is standing near the table. Out of all the Germans I have met, he alone omits to salute. He is chary of words ; I wonder if he is ashamed of what he has to do. He makes a sign for me to lie down. I protest : ‘ I have already been examined.’

“ ‘ *This* is not like the other examination.’

“ ‘ What—what do you mean ? ’

“ Troubled, and seeking for his words as if he found it difficult to speak French : ‘ I see you don’t understand.’

“ I feel as if I am stifling, my voice is choked, I am sure I look like a mad woman. The Major paces backwards and forwards.

“ ‘ Come, mademoiselle ! ’

“ I look at him fixedly. I don’t wish to appear a frightened suppliant. I have never opposed a German before. I try to preserve my dignity. Doubtless my attitude impresses him. He invents an excuse.

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“ ‘ Perhaps you are not very well to-day ?
You can be examined another time.’ ”

“ The victims find themselves once more outside ; they are trembling with anger, pale with shame. They dare not look at each other, they dare not question each other. Very slowly, by devious ways in order to avoid meeting people, at length they reach home.

“ But our neighbours at ‘ My Fancy ’ have waited and watched for us. ‘ Have you seen the Commandant ? ’ ‘ Are you going to work ? ’ ‘ What has happened ? ’ ‘ Why do you all look so distressed ? ’ ”

“ After some difficulty the poor girls shake off their questioners. They go into the house and shut the door. Their grief is succeeded by an outburst of rage.

“ ‘ Oh ! the bad men—the monsters—to have *dared!* ’ ”

In a corner, three of Yvonne’s friends who have been forced to submit to the examination are weeping bitterly.

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“ They say we are *Good for everything.*”

The young girls have heard much since the invasion, and they understand the full significance of these words. They know facts which are generally ignored in France, but which are common property in the invaded districts: *when a woman has been possessed by a German, and a child is the result—the baby, if a boy, is sent to Germany to provide future “cannon fodder,” a girl is left with the unhappy mother.*

CHAPTER VIII

“ I WILL BE YOUR FATHER ”

“NEXT day, at half-past four, the réveille wakes me. I get up. I open the window; it is beautiful weather. I rouse my companions, who begin to protest: ‘ Surely the réveille has sounded too early? ’

“ ‘ No, you know that German time is an hour earlier than ours; besides, it is summer, and if we want to take Holy Communion this morning we must get up at once.’

“ Simone de V. lights the fire, boils the milk, which she pours into a bottle and wraps round to keep warm. Milk and some bread and butter constitute the morning meal. Jeanne has hurt her foot in moving a wash-tub the evening before. She wants,

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however, to go to work. We all forbid her to think of it, and in order not to anger the Germans, Simone de V. says quietly :

“ ‘ I’ll go instead of her.’ ”

Yvonne has other interests this morning. Desirous of obtaining her repatriation and that of her friends, she is actually going to interview the Commandant !

“ I make a special toilette—that’s to say, I brush my coat and skirt very carefully, also my hat, and I examine my gloves : one of them has a hole in the thumb ; I hide this by carrying my glove in my hand.”

In the village there are no needles or thread. Everything in the shops has been commandeered since the occupation, and one of the prisoners’ chief worries is to see their clothes wear out without being able either to mend them or replace them.

“ Our boots, above all, simply fall to pieces before our eyes, the roads are flinty, and we always rush along fearful of being late for work. Every morning we believe

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that the holes in our boots grow larger. In the hurry of departure we have only brought a little body-linen with us."

The group of prisoners move in the direction of the road to B——. There they part, wishing each other good luck.

"The door of the Kommandantur is wide open. My heart beats, but my mind is made up. Without caring a jot for the sentinel, who, however, does not think of stopping me, I enter, and find myself in a middle-class house—a little hall, a room on the right, another on the left, both now turned into offices. The open windows afford me a glimpse of someone in the room on the left, a big, middle-aged man, who looks kind. He comes towards me and asks what I want.

" ' I wish to see the Commandant. '

" ' He is not here. '

" ' But I am told he comes here every morning. '

" ' Yes, but not before nine o'clock. '

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“ ‘ It is a quarter to nine ; I shall wait. ’

“ Suddenly a beardless young secretary appears, whom I have already seen. He was helping with the roll-call yesterday. We nick-named him ‘ Polo ’ because his hair was so odd.”

Insolent and domineering, he speaks to the captives as if they were criminals. If one dares to oppose him in the slightest degree, he explodes like a big gun ! In German he is told the object of Yvonne’s visit.

“ She wants an interview with the Commandant.”

“ It is to make a complaint. Send her away ! ”

Then, turning to Yvonne, he says, speaking French in snappish tones :

“ What do *you* want with the Commandant ? There are no complaints to make. ’

Very quietly Yvonne repeats :

“ I wish to see the Commandant.”

“ He is not here.”

“ I shall wait.”

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“ He is not coming.”

“ I shall wait all the same.”

“ And seeing my persistence, the big man interposes, ‘ Madame can wait here,’ and he shows me the office opposite.

“ I go in.

“ The big man brings me a chair. ‘ Polo ’ follows me and sits down nervously. He frowns, then says brusquely :

“ ‘ What do you want to tell the Commandant ? ’

“ ‘ I wish to speak to him about my position here.’

“ ‘ Nothing can be done to alter it. Besides, the Commandant is not coming.’

“ ‘ I beg your pardon. He is here ! ’

“ The Commandant enters, accompanied by Weeks. He goes upstairs. Without any further ceremony I follow him. He turns round on the landing. Very politely he bows to me.

“ ‘ Madame, what can I do for you ? ’

“ He opens the door and motions me

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inside. Standing still, he questions me. I tell him that there are many young girls who have been abducted without any real reason. Our families have always provided for our wants ; we are not even in the category of the unemployed, whom the Germans have pretended solely to abduct. He listens, bending a little forward.

“ ‘ I know that there have been—what do you call it ?—mistakes.’ ”

“ He speaks French with a pure accent, but he seems to find some difficulty in employing the right words. He asks me to tell him several details, asks where we are living, and, in a careless tone, concludes by saying, ‘ Come now, you are not so unhappy as all that.’ ”

“ I remember what I have gone through since my abduction, yesterday especially. ‘ I think you will agree, M. le Commandant, that days like yesterday are——’ ”

“ He interrupts me brutally : ‘ What do you expect ? It is the fortune of war.’ ”

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“ He moves away and looks at some papers which Weeks is holding. His last words have roused all my bitterness of heart.

“ ‘ It *is* the fortune of war. My brother has been killed, sir.’

“ My eyes fill with tears. Utterly unmoved, he bows, smiles, and says, ‘ I will see what can be done.’

“ A conventional phrase, a polite way of getting rid of me ! ”

Notwithstanding her disappointment, Yvonne X. makes haste to return home and prepare the meal for her fellow-workers. Whilst she is busy at the stove, one of the neighbours, old little Mlle. B., comes in stealthily and whispers :

“ The Commandant is at ‘ My Fancy ’ ; he has just gone to see Mme. D. They are talking about you.”

A few minutes afterwards Mme D. rushes in, her face radiant.

“ Where is Simone ? The Commandant wants to see her.”

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“ She is working among the cabbages, as you know. I'll send her to you when she comes back.”

“ Noon strikes. I go to meet my friends. I see them on the road. They are resting. They seem very tired. They have tied little handkerchiefs over their heads to protect them from the heat of the sun. Seeing me, they hurry along.

“ ‘ Simone, the Commandant is at Mme. D.'s. He wants to see you.’

“ ‘ I'm very sorry, but I'm not going.’

“ I insist ; she is particularly obdurate. The others explain the reason :

“ She is angry because he came to watch us planting cabbages, and wanted to take a snapshot. We turned our backs on him. Then, laughing at us, he said : ‘ Don't they work well ? What can one do to help these poor little girls ? ’ ”

Simone de V. yields, however, to the entreaties of her friends, and her companions begin their lunch. They are hungry, they

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are bent with constant stooping, they complain of pains in the back and in the kidneys. The great heat adds to their fatigue. They eat at first in silence, then between mouthfuls they describe how the morning has passed.

“ A soldier was there to teach us. This is how he explained the habits of the cabbage: ‘ If little cabbage not deep enough—no good. Rain comes, little cabbage takes a walk ! If too deep, little cabbage suffocates.’ And to make us understand him better, he puffed out his fat cheeks and pretended he was choking ! ”

The meal is not over when Simone de V. returns ; she is very angry.

“ You have seen the Commandant ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ What did he say ? ”

“ Nothing at all. Mme. D. and her daughter did all the talking.”

Simone has hardly finished speaking when Mme. D. enters, laughing and crying at once.

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“ I always *knew* your troubles would soon be over. First, here is some good news. You can write to comfort your mothers ! The Commandant has promised to send a letter. He will also see that you receive the answer. My poor children, I am so sorry for your people ; I know how despairing I should feel if my H  l  ne were carried off. As to the medical examination, Yvonne, you and your friends who haven't yet been examined can make your minds easy ; the Commandant tells me that he will speak to the Major and get you exempted. He added that he was very surprised at the way in which the Major had behaved. ‘ He's such a decently brought up young fellow,’ he said. And you need not go back to work this afternoon. I told the Commandant that, through walking to and fro for eight days, you soon won't have a particle of shoe-leather left. He promises, therefore, that you shall only work in the mornings. Are you pleased ? ”

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“My God! *Were* we pleased? We clung to Mme. D., who then wept more than ever.”

The afternoon passes in composing a general letter. Yvonne X. writes it and reads it to Mme. D. It is arranged that the girls shall take it to the Kommandantur on the morrow. But the Commandant is absent the next day and the day after. The captives are worried over these delays.

“Since our abduction,” Yvonne told me, “our thoughts were always with our loved ones. We knew exactly what risks we ran; we saw ever-changing events; by marvellous good fortune we had been placed under the jurisdiction of an exceptionally tolerant Commandant who certainly tried to mitigate our lot. But our parents! We thought of our mothers who were racked by agonising fears, and who, since our departure, had not received a single word from us.”

At last, on the afternoon of the third day, the Commandant comes to “My Fancy” and calls at Mme. D.’s house.

“ I WILL BE YOUR FATHER ”

“ Told this by a neighbour, I take a basket which I have borrowed from Mme. D., and make my visit a pretext for returning it. The Commandant recognises me at once, and shakes hands with me.”

He tries to treat the period of the young girls' slavery more or less lightly. He does not wish to understand what these poor creatures (little better, indeed, than slaves) have endured. He turns laughing to Yvonne X.

“ So you want to go back to Lille ? ”

Yvonne X. thanks him for having given permission to write a letter. She offers it to him, and the Commandant puts it in his pocket. Just as she is about to leave, Yvonne says a few charming words to Mme. D., thanking her for showing such motherly kindness to the lonely girls. The Commandant approves, and says :

“ Mme. D. will represent your mother, and, for the future, *I will be your father.* ”

“ The inconsistency shown by our enemies is really remarkable ! ”

CHAPTER IX

THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE.

THE hard work on the land, the separation from their homes, the deprivation of their liberty are not the only trials which the déportées have to endure. They are now faced with the prospect of starvation.

“We have put all our money in one common fund, but our capital is small. I am the only one who has brought away any gold. I still have two hundred francs. If our captivity lasts, as everyone seems to think it will, for the duration of the war, we shall have to be as economical as possible and husband our resources. Madeleine, who cuts the bread, is always very sparing, but one day there is no bread to cut.”

THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE

Fortunately, there is a good food recipe now obtainable in the country. With coarsely ground barley and milk it is possible to make waffle cakes! One neighbour lends a griddle, another brings the girls a little barley hidden in the bottom of a basket. The prisoners begin to grind it. Take care not to be detected! One of them keeps watch at the door. And it is well that she does so. Here comes the gardener! As if by enchantment the coffee-mill and the griddle vanish in the cupboard. The man enters; he does not notice anything.

“Mademoiselle ‘Chief,’ why haven’t your friends come to work this morning?”

“The Commandant says they need not.”

“To-morrow, then.”

“Yes—if it doesn’t rain; you know, if it rains, the ‘little cabbage plants take a walk.’”

The gardener goes away. The starving girls proceed with their waffle-making. The waffles are soon ready to eat. They taste delicious.

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It rains next day. How lucky—no cabbage-planting! But the larder is empty. Yvonne and Simone decide to make the round of the neighbouring farms. Perhaps they will be able to buy some eggs.

“The first house we go into is tenanted by a worn-out old man. He looks at us most suspiciously.

“‘Have you any eggs for sale?’ He shakes his head.

“‘What, no eggs, with all these fowls?’

“‘You don’t seem to realise that I have to take my eggs to the Kommandantur. Do you think I’m going to be such a fool as to risk a fine in order to oblige *you*?’ And to get rid of the importunate egg-seekers, the old man asks them rudely, ‘Why are you taking a walk instead of getting on with your work? Come, come, you’ll soon have to help with the haymaking.’

“We make good our retreat without waiting to hear any more. But it is the same tale all over the countryside :

THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE

“ ‘ We have no eggs. Go and try somewhere else. Go to Foulzy—there may be a few there. The patrol has just passed, so you can go to Foulzy without any danger of meeting it.’ ”

The good-tempered girls take this advice. Foulzy is some distance away, and it rains worse than ever. However, what does it matter? They walk on cheerfully. Here is Foulzy at last!

“ Whoever told us that since the German occupation the French villages are models of cleanliness and sanitation? Foulzy must certainly be the exception to the rule. There are mounds of dung heaped up all the way down the village street, and the liquid manure flows from them in streams. We jump from cobble to cobble in order to save our poor shoes from sticking in the horrible muck. We knock first at one door, then at another. The village seems deserted. At last we see a woman standing on the threshold of her house.

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“ ‘Eggs? I should say *not*; your luck is dead out. All the eggs have been taken to the Kommandantur this morning.’

“ We are in despair. Our friends are waiting hungry at home, and it looks as if we should return as empty-handed as we left. A small child who is eating a piece of bread is watching us. We decide to speak to him.

“ ‘Little one, is your mother at home?’

“ ‘No.’

“ ‘Has she any eggs?’

“ ‘No.’

“ ‘Do you know where I can get any?’

“ ‘Yes—lower down, at the house with the little brown door.’

“ I knock at the brown door. I go in. At the top of a ladder-like stairway I see a dreadful, unkempt old woman looking at me. I repeat my question. She replies, ‘How many eggs do you want?’ ‘As many as you can let me have.’

“ The old woman climbs down the ladder,

THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE

opens a cupboard, and brings out a basket. We count twenty-eight eggs!

“ ‘ There’s another on the window-sill, but it’s cracked.’

“ ‘ I’ll take it. What do I owe you?’

“ ‘ Eggs are a penny (two sous) each.’

“ I pay this ridiculous sum. In Lille an egg costs sevenpence-halfpenny! (75 centimes).

“ We go homewards. At every turning we are on the watch for the patrol—but no patrol comes! At last we reach our little house. We are wet through, our feet are too painful for words, we are up to our eyes in mud, but WE HAVE SOMETHING TO EAT!”

CHAPTER X

THE SUFFERINGS OF THE YOUNG

WORN out by work to which they are totally unaccustomed, insufficiently fed, sleeping little and badly, utterly depressed by one continuous period of grief, the captives feel their powers of endurance gradually decreasing.

“It was just as if we had suddenly grown old. Every day we say we simply *must* do a little less.”

The weeks pass in a sad and gloomy monotony—every one seems the same! For a long time the poor children waited and hoped for a reply to the letter which the Commandant had promised to transmit for them. The answer never came. Was the

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letter ever sent?*" Oh, disappointment is all the more cruel when once hope has fled!

As the days succeeded one another and brought no promise of change, the prisoners saw the bright mirage of freedom gradually fade and then vanish for ever.

"It does indeed mean—for the duration of the war."

"Our afternoons are more miserable than any other time," says Yvonne. "In our little house we have absolutely nothing to do; when we have washed and dried the bowl and plate which represent our crockery, pared the potatoes and cut the vegetables, we sit with our hands in front of us. The few books which the priest lends us don't distract our minds. We are always thinking of our homes, our former happy lives. Often and often I have seen one of my

* In justice to the Commandant it must be said that later, when Yvonne X. returned to Lille, she found that he had kept his promise and sent the letter, but that her mother had never received it.

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friends pretend to be asleep in order to disguise the fact that she was really quietly crying.

“ Certain sights don't tend to reassure us ! One dreadfully wet day we see a ' green devil ' ride past our house. He has in custody a man and three young girls who are following him on foot, with no protection from the driving rain and wind. The young girls' wet clothes are literally plastered to their bodies. They are being taken to the guard-house because they have refused to undergo the odious medical examination.

“ Our one fear is that our Commandant will be replaced by another who will perhaps practise all the refinements of Kultur.”

The prisoners have every reason for apprehension. Their régime is exceptionally light. In many villages in the Ardennes dreadful and abominable things happen.

An instance—three young girls refuse to

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work. They are condemned to death, placed against a wall one by one, and then—out of sheer devilish cruelty—they are only shot in the cheek ! Nearly everywhere the Germans wilfully force decent girls to mix with prostitutes. They class all women under one category. Certain girls who protested against the medical examination received the following reply—*and the words were spoken by a Sister of Charity :*

“ Don't make a fuss ; after all, you are nothing but prostitutes.”

A farmer who had six girls sent by the authorities to work on his land was told they were women of loose morals. When he found that this was not the case, he went at once to the officer responsible for the statement.

“ Everything goes to prove that these girls have led decent lives,” said he. The officer shrugged his shoulders.

“ Oh, believe what you like ! The French are nothing but a nation of fools.”

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But an inquiry was nevertheless instituted and the farmer was proved to be right.*

If some of the captives billeted in houses do not suffer quite so much from hunger owing to the kindness of the country people, others—and by far the greater number—who are encamped in warehouses and dis-used factories, get only just enough food to keep body and soul together. They sleep on bundles of straw, and they suffer through personal contact with their companions. During all the months of their captivity many girls don't even dare to undress themselves.

Frequently, with the idea of instituting a state of general immorality, the Germans put several men in houses where there were perhaps only one or two women! Words cannot describe what took place when soldiers returning from Verdun were billeted

* Two *déportées* who, after many perils, had escaped, were court-martialled at Lille, and gave as a reason for their action that they could not bear to mix with prostitutes. They were acquitted.

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severely. Their legs are covered with open wounds, which no one troubles to bind up, and which fester in consequence. A young man from Turcoing will be a cripple for the rest of his life through a neglected sore. When the rough dressing was removed (after having been left on the wound for three weeks), the air was absolutely poisoned!

“ However,” says Yvonne X., “ notwithstanding all our sorrows and trials, we did not lose our courage and our trust in God. We had proofs enough by this time to convince us that our cause was just. We remembered how formidable the German Army was at the beginning of the war. Had we not seen the troops pass through Lille? This great army was diminishing in strength daily. We saw the gradual weakening of its morale, anxiety and discontent had now entered its ranks. *We knew that in the end we should be victorious. How could we fail to be otherwise?* ”

CHAPTER XI

THE DAY OF DELIVERANCE.

THE girls have now seemingly reached the climax of their misery. Suddenly a rumour spreads through the little village. From whence does it originate? From the Kommandantur? Perhaps! This is the astonishing news:

Yvonne X. and Simone de V. are to be released!

“My friends get wind of this at lunch. No doubt they are glad to think that two of us are going away to freedom; but, on the other hand, their own fate seems worse than ever. They begin to cry bitterly, ‘What will become of us?’

“I try to calm their distress. ‘After all,

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it isn't certain that we are leaving you. You know I have never asked any favour for myself alone. I've spoken for all of us.' 'We know, but we know only too well what will happen.'

"To make certain, they go to B——. They return overwhelmed with grief. 'It's true, you are both going.'

"I am peeling potatoes, but on hearing this I drop the knife and the potato!

"'Who told you?'

"'An émigré who works at the Kommandantur. He knows all about it.'

"Leaning against the mantelpiece, they weep piteously. Some hours pass. At last a neighbour arrives, and gives me a note directed to me in pencil, but before I can open it she says:

"'You are in luck's way—you are all going back to Lille.'

"And she runs away in order to hide her emotion."

Yvonne X. opens the note and reads:

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“ Mles. Simone de V., Yvonne X., Jeanne, Juliette, Madeleine are to report themselves with their luggage at B—— to-morrow punctually at three o'clock (German time).”

The joy of the young girls is so intense that at first they are speechless, stirred to the very depths of their souls. But soon the happy elasticity of youth reasserts itself; they laugh and embrace each other—Valentine, Simone de V.'s servant, is the only sad one present. Her name is not on the list. Her friends try to comfort her: “It's surely an oversight!”

“With feverish energy we collect our belongings. We are just beginning to pack, when Hélène D. rushes in like a whirlwind.

“‘The Commandant wants to see you. Come quickly to our house.’

“The Commandant! To hear is to obey. The Commandant is sitting on the couch with his legs crossed. He smiles slyly at the young girls. ‘Ah,’ says he, ‘you are not so cross as you were the other morning.

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You don't mind looking at me to-day, do you? ' "

Well aware that they owe their freedom to his kindly interest, the captives hasten to express their gratitude.

" Oh, it's nothing. I've received a telegram from Lille ordering me to send you back."

Simone de V. begs for the release of her servant, but she finds herself up against a refusal.

" I can do nothing ; the matter is out of my jurisdiction. I am sending only those to Lille whose names have been given me. That's all about it."

As the Commandant is waiting for one of his officers who is late, he says to Yvonne :

" Tell me what actually happened at Lille? "

" I obey. I keep back nothing. I describe all the brutality of our abduction. The Commandant frequently interrupts me.

" ' It's inconceivable, it's really inconceivable,' he mutters.

" Then, addressing his hostess : ' I can't

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help thinking how awful it would have been if this had happened to my wife or to my darling little Maria Ursula ! ’

“ Then : ‘ The authorities have acted very foolishly. Listen. Yesterday I was at Z——. An émigré begged me to release him. ‘ What is your profession, my friend ? ’ ‘ I am an opera singer ! ’ ”

“ This seems to amuse the Commandant. He laughs immoderately and slaps his knees in his mirth. Then, turning to the young girls, he begins to pay them insipid German compliments.

“ ‘ And you are really pleased to leave us ? I, personally, am most grieved. The flowers of ‘ My Fancy ’ are going away : don’t say it is not so. But everything in this world has its uses, flowers *and* cabbages. ’ ”

“ We almost stamp with impatience. The hour is approaching. We haven’t even started to pack. At last the officer arrives. The Commandant rises, but still he seems to be in no hurry. He discusses the war.

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It is certain now that we shall never reach B—— by 3 o'clock.

“The Commandant remarks with great emphasis: ‘*There would never have been any war if you had not forced it upon us.*’

“This statement is so barefaced that I indignantly protest:

“‘*What! Why, we did absolutely nothing!*’

“He continues: ‘I repeat what I have already said. The war would have been over long ago but for the French—it’s always Ambition and Glory with them!’

“After this preposterous statement, he goes, but not without wishing us a *pleasant journey*.

“‘Good-bye! Bon voyage!’

“In a twinkling our luggage is fastened. Madame D. and Héléne accompany us to the village. Six other girls are already there. They call over our names, and before the eyes of the astonished peasants and soldiers we go, for the last time, up the road which we have traversed so wearily and so sadly for many weeks.”

CHAPTER XII

THE RETURN

AT four o'clock the train steams out of the station. The travellers are allowed to travel third class. A soldier goes with them. But their troubles are not over! At Hirson they are told to get out of the train.

“At first we think it is to change carriages, but no! We are taken to the general waiting-room, where we find forty-eight women and four men. Our luggage is put on some carts. What *does* it mean? Are we being deceived, after all? The soldiers tell us that we are going to stay the night at Hirson.”

The procession of prisoners passes in a long line through the town. The inhabitants flock to look at them.

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“ If the moon had suddenly fallen on the Grande Place the people could not have evinced greater surprise. No strangers had penetrated this invaded region since the war ! We looked absolutely unprepossessing. Our clothes had seen service all day and every day, first in the cattle-truck, then in the fields at the mercy alike of sunshine and rain. I was wearing an enormous pair of men’s shoes, in a hateful shade of yellow—the only footgear I had been able to buy.

“ Curiously the women approach us.

“ ‘ Where do you come from ? What are you doing here ? ’

“ The soldiers are not less astonished than the civilians. Inside the houses the officers pull the curtains aside and stare at us. Others stop dead in the middle of the street.

“ A journey seems interminable when one is in ignorance of one’s destination.

“ At last we reach the Kommandantur. We wait a long time outside the courtyard.

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An officer appears. He speaks French as well as we do.

“ ‘Mesdames, I am going to call over your names. We are sending you back to your homes. We are not going to treat you like prisoners, because you merit no punishment; but, as everyone is not yet here, we are taking you to an isolation hospital. . . . I think you will be very comfortable. We hope you won't be worried there. The hospital possesses a garden, but you will not be allowed to go out into the town.’ ”

The isolation hospital was once a girls' school. It has retained its dormitories, its tiny narrow beds, it also boasts a chapel where services are conducted by a German chaplain.

The young girls are provided with a meal in one of the dormitories—it is very unappetising, just a little rice and a few potatoes swimming in water.

“ Whilst eating, we look at each other with some curiosity. The greater number

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of my new companions have evidently suffered from hunger in the villages to which they were deported. Their pale faces are thin, their eyes unnaturally bright. They have had to work very hard. We are the first women to be repatriated to Lille—*forty-eight women out of six thousand!*”

Next morning the young girls attend chapel. The German chaplain joins them and distributes the leaflets of the canticles. He intones, “I am a Christian.” The Mass begins. After reading the Gospel, the chaplain turns to the Faithful. His lips move. He apparently finds the French pronunciation very difficult. Every second he stops, as if seeking for the right words.

“My dear children, I don’t know much French, but I should like to say something. Will you forgive my faults? The Blessed Virgin, my dear children in Christ, should be our model. The Blessed Virgin did not have all pleasure and joy in her life, there was also for her the cradle and the cross!

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And for you, too, dear children, the war brings pain and suffering. You understand my meaning, don't you? But the Blessed Virgin sorrows no longer, for she is in heaven! For us, too, Heaven will mean the end of all our earthly troubles. I can't say this very well, but I'm sure you will try and understand, won't you, dear children?"

Simple words, but yet how touching in their simplicity and their incorrect phrasing!

"For the first time since the occupation," Yvonne X. told me, "we felt that a soul free from base passions was hidden under the uniform of our enemies."

The day dragged its weary length. Even two meals like that of the night before only take a few minutes to eat.

"We wander up and down our garden, and at four o'clock we go again to chapel, drawn thither by feelings of devotion and a very human wish to make the time pass a little more quickly. We repeat the rosary, which the chaplain had especially enjoined

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us to remember. He repeats it himself. Between each ten beads he intones a canticle to the Virgin of Lourdes, omitting, however, the strophes which refer to the glorification of France.

“Towards evening an officer comes to say that our departure is fixed for the morrow—Sunday. We shall have to get up at five. He can't tell us the time of our train; it will depend on the passage of certain troop trains.

“‘You are now free,’ he repeats, ‘but you are not to travel alone. Some soldiers will accompany you.’

“He speaks with much deference, wishing perhaps to make amends for all we have undergone.”

The travellers are so frightened at the thought of missing the train that they are ready by three o'clock the next morning. They dress and do their hair by the flickering light of a solitary candle. At five they pass through the deserted streets. At six

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their train starts. Seated in third-class carriages, they are comfortable in comparison with the manner in which they were at first obliged to travel. They watch the changing landscape. With feelings almost akin to pain they notice outlined against the clear sky the heights of the Ardennes, now completely stripped of their verdure. The darkly mysterious forests which clothed the earth have all disappeared ; everything is bare, burnt up, destroyed.

“ The train moves slowly. There are frequent and often interminable delays. At Aulnoye, for example, we wait four hours on a siding. The only diversion en route is to inspect the Germans.

“ They ask us where we are going. We answer, ‘ Lille,’ and because every good German begrudges his enemy the slightest happiness they keep on saying :

“ ‘ Lille ! Oh, it’s dreadful there ! The town is destroyed.’

“ At last, with indescribable emotion, the

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travellers hear the deep voice of the guns.

“ We didn't hear it in the Ardennes. Sometimes we heard the guns of Verdun, ever so far away. But here the firing is quite close ; it is the message of our Allies ; it shows that they have not forgotten us, that the Day of our Deliverance is at hand.

“ We meet more and more trainloads of soldiers. Here is the station at Fives ! We are near home now. At three o'clock we arrive at Lille.

“ At first we thought that ‘ They ’ would shut us in a waiting-room, and keep us there until after dark.”

But no ! Accompanied by two soldiers, groups of the young girls go up the Rue de la Gare. The Germans look at them as they pass.

“ But they walk just like our own soldiers ! ” remarks a Boche, full of his own importance.

Anxious to reach their homes, the girls hurry, forgetting their heavy luggage and

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taking no notice of the soldiers, who say, "Slowly now, a little slower, *please.*"

"We don't even hear their words. The good Lilleois are enjoying their usual Sunday walk. They line up to see us. Certain of us are recognised, and are eagerly questioned. A kiss falls on my cheek before I know who has bestowed it. I look round and see my old friend, dear Madame B.

"Suddenly she remembers my mother, and cries, 'Oh, how overjoyed she will be to see you!'

"Our escort makes us pass the ruined Town Hall, burnt down on Easter Monday. They then take us to the Kommandantur. From there we go to the Rue de Pas, where we answer the roll-call and our identities are verified."

The prisoners now really believe that they are released from captivity. They breathe freely once more. But not yet! A much-bedizened and decorated officer with a hard expression enters, sizes the girls up, and

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says in a consequential voice, although he seems really to be more of a fool than a knave, "So you have refused to work."

"Nobody answers him. A dreadful silence ensues. Another officer addresses us :

" ' *You are free.*'

"Making my way as best I could through the crowd, stopped first by one and then by another, at last I managed to jump into a tram. Madame B.'s husband had already prepared them at home for my arrival. *Mamma was waiting for me at the open door !*"

PART II

THE STORY OF MARIE

NOTE

Marie Z. is infinitely more to be pitied than the girl whose experiences have just been related. Like her, Marie is a native of Lille, and when she was abducted she was barely twenty. "A child—nothing but a child"—such were the words applied to her by one of the Huns ordered to carry her into slavery.

CHAPTER I

“ WE WANT THIS NICE LITTLE GIRL ! ”

THE abductions began in April, 1916. The first took place at Fives, in the middle of the night of Holy Saturday. The Germans seized young girls, boys, fathers of families—they made no class distinctions. Terrible scenes occurred. Those named as *déportés* resisted stubbornly, mad with misery. The Germans then fired on the crowd.

At Lille we were in an agony of apprehension, but it was said that Monsignor Charost had lodged a personal protest with the Governor von Gravenitz, who had promised him that no young girls should be abducted.

“ On Easter Sunday papa, who looked very grave, came in from his evening walk,

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and said, 'To-night I hear there is certain to be a house-to-house visit, but I do not think that any girls will be taken away from their homes.'

"However, we are very uneasy. One of my brothers, who is twenty-six years old, has been discharged from the army on account of bad health. We try to believe that the Boches will never dare take him. We stifle our own apprehensions, and we go to bed just as usual."

Marie Z. was awakened about half-past two.

"Some troops are passing in the street. I jump out of bed, I run to the window. Gracious Heaven, it is a number of infantry with fixed bayonets! Little groups of them are stopping outside every house—they are ringing the door-bells. I rush into my parents' bedroom, shrieking, 'The Germans are outside! They've come to take me away! *Oh, I'm so frightened!*'"

"Papa gets up, goes to the window, and

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says, doubtless to pacify me, ‘ Go back to bed, darling. They are searching the houses on the opposite side. They won’t come here to-day.’ ”

Almost at the same moment the bell rings. Monsieur Z., who is greatly agitated, goes downstairs. Ten German soldiers are in the hall. One of them, who acts as spokesman, says brusquely :

“ An officer is coming here to name those who are to leave Lille. Prepare to see him at once.”

“ We live in a large house which has been converted into flats,” explains Marie. “ I go downstairs with my mother. The other tenants do likewise. We talk and tremblingly wonder which of us will be taken. I think we all try in our hearts to invent especial reasons why we should *not* be chosen. The officers arrive. They are middle-aged men. One asks to see my brother, and whilst he goes upstairs with mamma the other studies the census paper

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which hangs in the hall. The Germans have decided that mothers of children under fourteen years of age shall not be carried off. All the young married women who live in the house are therefore exempted! The officer verifies this. Then comes *my* name; he asks where I am, and when I come forward he says :

“ ‘Mademoiselle must prepare to go away.’ ”

Slight and graceful, Marie looks remarkably fragile. Her long hair falls down her back in a thick plait, and she appears even younger than she really is. Her father entreats the officer to be merciful.

“ Sir, I beg—it cannot be possible—you won’t do this thing. My daughter is not strong, she’s been ill, and *she is so young!* ”

The officer replies with deadly sarcasm :

“ Precisely so. And because she is delicate, all the more reason why mademoiselle should go into the country.”

The father persists :

“ Take me instead. You will have a good

“ WE WANT THIS NICE GIRL ”

substitute. I shall work much better than Marie.”

The officer shakes his head ; then, pointing to his victim, says laughing :

“ No, no ! We want her. *We want this nice little girl.*”

He turns away. A soldier looks at Marie and exclaims :

“ But she’s only a child.” And one of his comrades answers in tones full of sinister meaning :

“ *The life she is going to lead will soon make a woman of her.*”

“ I was in despair,” says Marie. “ I began to cry ; I couldn’t stifle my sobs.”

At this moment Madame Z. comes down the staircase. “ She is so happy. The officer says that my brother is far too ill to be moved. Suddenly she hears my father say to me :

“ ‘ My poor darling, you’d better get ready. There’s no escape.’ ”

Madame Z. drops without a word ; it

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was just as if someone had suddenly knocked her down. Nevertheless, Marie is obliged to go and dress. In her bedroom, spread over a chair, is the new costume which she is going to wear in honour of Easter. She puts it on; she packs some underlinen, sewing materials, and a wrap in her valise. In ten minutes she is ready. In the hall where the soldiers are waiting the tenants stand apart in an agitated little group. The women are weeping bitterly, the men curse the wrongdoers under their breath.

“My father, who has a ‘permit’ which allows him to go wherever he chooses in the town, is going to see the last of me. But I have to say good-bye to my mother. I’ve never left her before—even for a day.”

The parting between mother and daughter is agonising. Madame Z. clings to Marie, who has literally to be torn from her. The broken-hearted woman throws herself down on the tessellated pavement of the hall, seizes hold of a soldier’s coat, prays the men

“WE WANT THIS NICE GIRL”

not to take her child. Her cry is always the same :

“ My daughter ! My darling ! ”

“ Once outside,” Marie tells me, “ I never cease looking back, and I see mamma leaning out of our dining-room window, calling in a voice half inaudible with sobs, ‘ Farewell, farewell, little daughter of my heart.’ ”

“ Later, when I returned to Lille, I heard that for two long months my mother had passed entire days outside our door, hoping against hope that I should come home again.”

Monsieur Z., who carries his daughter’s portmanteaux, walks by her side. Ten soldiers with fixed bayonets surround them. Are the Germans so afraid of women that it requires *ten soldiers to carry off one child* ?

The “ clearing-house ” arranged for the captives is a café at the corner of the Rue Colbert. Fifty prisoners are here. They are sitting about wherever they can find any room—on their luggage, on the corners of

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the tables, on the leather-covered seats used by frequenters of the establishment. Up to the last moment Monsieur Z. displays magnificent fortitude. Because of those present who look curiously at him, because the soldiers are watching him, and, above all, because he will not add to his child's unhappiness, he stifles his emotion.

“ Poor papa kissed me without shedding a tear ; but when he was going away I saw him take out his handkerchief, and by the movement of his shoulders I guessed that he was weeping.”

Male and female captives continue to arrive. At seven o'clock an officer gives the order to depart.

“ I am looking about, hoping to discover a friendly face, when I see Jeanne B., one of our neighbours. At the time of the bombardment an incendiary bomb fell on her house. She took refuge with us, and went through the last bombardment hidden in our cellar.”

“WE WANT THIS NICE GIRL”

The two young girls walk side by side and decide to remain together, if possible. Jeanne is twenty-three. As she has been accustomed, ever since she was quite a girl, to look after herself, she will be a great comfort to Marie, who is nervous and certainly not self-reliant. The hours of misery which they are destined to share will closely unite them in affection. “Soon,” Marie told me, “we called each other by our Christian names; we were like two sisters.”

Some of the prisoners take their seats in a tram, and the other déportés are conducted to the goods station of the St. Sauveur Station.

“We were marched all round the town, down the boulevards, past the Dunkirk and the Béthune gateways. It seemed as if the Germans wished to make an example of us in order to terrify the inhabitants. We left the Rue Colbert at seven o’clock, and did not reach the goods station at Fives before half-past eight!”

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After a long day's waiting in the "hall" of the station the captives are marched off to the train destined to bear them away. They are put in cattle-trucks, the doors of which are at once closed. Penned up like animals, the unhappy creatures abandon themselves to their thoughts. But as the train passes near Hellemmes, under the bridge of Mont-de-Terre, a sudden noise of shouting rises above the rattle of the wheels. The prisoners hear . . . they can see nothing, but they feel that the shouts *are for them*. They are right. Their relations, their friends are standing on the bridge, and send them this last farewell.

"We could not see them, we could not answer, but we heard them calling us, and their cries re-echoed in our hearts."

CHAPTER II

BILLETED IN A HEN-HOUSE

“THE journey was extremely long. There were thirty persons, nearly all men, packed into our truck. After a little while they became more or less friendly, and tried to talk to us. Doubtless they were quite decent people, but they were rather loose-tongued. They smoked, they chewed tobacco, and then they spat out the nicotine juice. Most of them were in a state bordering upon intoxication, owing to having passed most of the preceding evening in the cafés. They discussed things which I had never heard mentioned, subjects which shocked me and increased my terror and misery. I said to myself, ‘My God . . . how low I have fallen!’”

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Marie's mental sufferings were now augmented by physical discomfort. "We are so thirsty—ever since the early morning we have only drunk a little coffee at the railway station. We ask the soldiers to give us some water. They take pity on us, and pour out some of their coffee in a quart measure. We share it, passing it round, and each one drinking a little."

The soldiers are not really bad at heart, but they show little respect for the women's modesty. "More than one of us feels the need to leave the truck for a few moments. As the step is very high, the Germans lift us down, holding us far more closely than is necessary. Many of the girls begin to cry, and the soldiers laugh at the fright of the 'little French girls.' Once on terra firma, a sentinel says he must accompany us."

Noticing a railway carriage standing on a siding, Marie screens herself from observation behind it. But the soldier follows her,

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and, instead of looking in another direction, watches the young girl with an expression that makes her wish to strike him. After a long wait at Hirson, the train starts.

“Oh, what a dreadful night! I cannot sleep, I keep on thinking of my parents. How I long for my pretty bedroom which opens out of theirs! Mamma always comes to kiss me good night, and she herself brings me my coffee and rolls every morning.”

About six o'clock the prisoners reach D—. There the men and women are separated. “We are told we must undergo a medical examination. I wait my turn sitting on the roadside. The Major, through whose hands I pass, is very easygoing. The examination is brief—it is chiefly in order to see whether any of us have certain spots on our bodies. Whilst awaiting instructions for our departure we are again penned up on the road. I am very hungry and also exceedingly thirsty.” When one is really up against life, one puts up with many dis-

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comforts. A little stream runs close to the roadside. Marie first quenches her thirst, and then she washes her face and hands.

“ I'm not *quite* so dirty, but I'm dropping with fatigue. I *must* sleep somewhere. My friend Jeanne says she will take care of my luggage.” A meadow is adjacent where some friendly cows are grazing. Marie lies down in the shade of a tree. All at once she falls asleep. When she awakes the sun is setting ; it is half-past five !

“ The mayors of the various communes are waiting with carts to convey us to the villages where we are to work. These carts are usually used for the removal of manure and wood. There are no seats, so the prisoners scramble in and sit on their luggage. With much cracking of whips, shouts of the drivers, grinding of wheels on the gravelled road, the heavy carts move slowly off. The evening draws in. The *déportés* from Fives who have arrived here on the previous day hail us as we pass.

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“ We acknowledge their greetings by singing the ‘Marseillaise.’ This is indeed treason, and the Germans try to silence us. We see them running, looking like devils let loose. They gesticulate, their mouths are wide open, they shout ‘Forbidden’ and many abominable remarks. But we only hold our heads high and sing all the more loudly.

“ The village priests do their utmost to comfort us ; some are men of ripe years, and others are old men whose faces bear the indelible imprint of age. They all try to say something consoling—they bless us. One even rides beside us for a few minutes. He questions us :

“ ‘ My dear children ! My poor children ! Whence do you come ? What is happening at Lille ? ’ ”

“ We ask him, ‘ How long do you think they will make us stay here ? ’ ”

“ He sighs : ‘ Alas ! my children, I fear until the end of the war ! ’ ”

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During the hours of early evening the captives journey towards the Unknown, waiting to discover where they are to be billeted.

The road is very varied. It winds up the hillsides, then it descends into the peaceful valleys, it is hidden awhile in the thick pine woods.

Violets are growing in purple patches under the trees, their intense perfume scents the cool night air. Now farms appear, little houses. Are the carts going to stop? No! Not yet.

“At last, about nine o’clock, after having come down the last hill and crossed a little river, the carts draw up in the market-place of a village where the church, the mairie, and the school are all close together. My friends are going to remain here, but the cart which contains myself, Jeanne, and some other prisoners is going on to a little hamlet about two miles away. We pass through two plantations, then we stop outside a farm. The farmer and his wife are

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standing on the threshold. The farmer says curtly, 'We have room for two. We would prefer to have women.'” Jeanne and Marie at once offer to work for them.

The farmer takes the girls across a yard to an odd little tumbledown house, of which one half serves as a stable and the other has been used for fifteen years as a combined rabbit-run and hen-house. The young girls are billeted in the hen-house.

During the day, in fact ever since the farmer's wife has been "advised" that émigrés will probably be billeted on her, she has hastily turned out the rabbits and the fowls. She has cleaned up the floor and scraped away the excrement with which it is encrusted. But the cobwebs still hang thickly in every nook and corner; in fact, they look almost like pieces of grey felt. The abominable stench which pervades the place seems to sting the nostrils and makes one feel horribly sick. The two girls look at one another in consternation. Is *this*

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where they will have to live during their captivity?

“The farmer’s wife rather kindly offers us some supper—we accept a bowl of milk. Then we examine the hen-house. They have only provided for our barest necessities; a bed made of three boards is supplied with a mattress, and a pair of clean sheets, which, however, are absolutely falling to pieces, so full of holes are they, and at the side of the bed is a little wooden table, positively black with dirt!

“We are so worn out that we only want to go to sleep and forget. But we are not even allowed that consolation. The cart in which we have ridden has been used for the transport of troops. *We have picked up some of their lice*, and the irritation keeps us wide awake; added to this, the hen-house is a most unrestful spot. Sometimes the screech-owls flit round the chimney and hoot dismally, and soon enormous rats make their appearance. They come in from the

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stable through the holes in the walls, and run about the room dancing a saraband, nibbling the woodwork, climbing all over the table and the bed ! ” The girls are sick with terror and disgust.

“ The first thing we do when we get up next morning is to run to the river and wash ourselves. We haven't a jug or a basin in the hen-house ! Then we set to work. With odd bits of wood, pieces of zinc, and old jam jars we try to close up the rat-holes ; we next make a broom out of some twigs and sweep our bedroom.

“ The priest surprises us in the midst of our occupation. It seems that we have the worst billet in the village. He exclaims, ‘ My poor little ones, what a dreadful place ! ’ He disappears, presently to return laden with rolls of wallpaper. ‘ I've been gleaning in my parish,’ he tells us. ‘ Here is something to help cover your walls.’

“ The wallpapers are of all patterns and all imaginable hues. There is just enough

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to make a deep dado." The two girls try to blend the shades, but the whole effect is such a medley that more than once during their captivity they actually laugh over it. The first week is devoted to "moving in," and as the captives possess nothing of their own, all contributions are gratefully received. One neighbour brings a platter, another a stove, a third, who perhaps knows the meaning of the word "vanity," presents the girls with a piece of looking-glass hardly the size of a saucer.

"The Mayor, to whom we have complained of our lack of a box or cupboard in which to keep our linen, is very good-natured. But he has no spare furniture. Suddenly he says, 'Ah, ha! why didn't I think of it before? There's a bookcase in the school-house. I'll have it emptied and brought over at once.'

"We wanted so much to have something to remind us of home," said Marie, "that we christened the hen-house Lille Villa."

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The arranging of their miserable hovel was not the most difficult task which the girls had to perform. "Since the war there was no coal at V——, but, nevertheless, we had to cook our food! The farmer's wife lent us a wheelbarrow and a chopper, and we set off to search for fuel."

The village lies in a valley, and the nearest plantation is a good half-hour's walk from it. When Marie and her friend get there they are already tired out. "However, we had to do what we could—break off the smallest branches and chop off the thick ones."

When Marie lived at Lille she would occasionally help in the house, but the greater part of her day was occupied with her needle-work or her music—she is passionately fond of music!

"I had no idea what it meant to be worried! Everything was made easy for me! I did not know the meaning of the word 'work'! Here, we have all to do

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ourselves ; nobody does a hand's turn for us. We try to chop the wood, but our hands soon begin to ache, the skin is all rubbed off ; we are clumsy because we don't understand how to set about our task, and don't seem strong enough to cut wood. A terrible sense of depression seizes me. I realise how far away I am from everyone who loves me. I sit on the ground and weep. I simply *can't* stop crying."

It is a long time before the girls have filled the wheelbarrow and reach the hen-house once more. The road winds up and down hill, the wheelbarrow seems made of lead ! They take turns to relieve each other. They exert all their strength, they push the barrow along with great difficulty. " But at last we reach Lille Villa. Alas ! when we have broken our wood into little pieces we see with despair that we have only enough fuel to last us for a day and a half. To-morrow we shall have to repeat to-day's painful experiences ! "

CHAPTER III

A BLOND BEAST'S LOVE-MAKING.

SOME days after the arrival of the captives the country policeman (who seems also to act as town-crier) comes through the hamlet. He stops before the houses occupied by the émigrés and rings his bell.

“ We are to assemble in the market-place at D—— at three o'clock. We leave directly after our midday meal. It is lovely weather ; the grassy slopes of the valley, the dear little houses surrounded with pretty gardens, the fields, the woods which spread half way up the hills, all make a charming picture ; one would like to linger and enjoy such surroundings. But, alas ! it is war-time, and we are prisoners.”

Marie and her companions follow the

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wooded banks of the river. When they reach D—— they find other prisoners already there. “ Like ourselves, they are in ignorance of what is going to happen.” Some mounted police next appear on the scene. Then officers and non-commissioned officers drive up.

One of these, called Hickel, is a young man of twenty-three. He has reddish fair hair, tall and thin, and speaks through his nose. He is always well turned out, his gloves and boots are irreproachable; he carries a whip in his hand and smokes a big cigar. He is well pleased with life, and better pleased to be a German, especially in France, where he can imitate the Kaiser and his methods in a small way.

Insolent, domineering, and a wouldbe seducer of young girls, Hickel soon reveals his true self to Marie in a particularly odious manner.

“ When we are waiting, Hickel comes up to us and says brutally, ‘ Men on the

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right, women on the left! Form up in twos! Damn it! Better than that! Now *left, right, march!* ” ”

Some of the girls giggle. Hickel loses his temper.

“ I forbid you to laugh. Those who laugh will be taken to the Kommandantur. They *will be very happy there. At the Kommandantur they like girls who are amusing.* Now, once more—by twos—left, right! ”

Hickel marches the prisoners away as if they were soldiers. “ Are you *not* soldiers? ” he asks them many times. “ Don't you realise that you have the inestimable privilege of being enrolled in the German Army, and that you now form part of the VI. Corps under Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria? ”

“ When we are lined up the Commandant arrives in his car; he passes down our ranks. The roll-call is read, and when we answer ‘ Here! ’ we are each given a registered number and a ‘ permit, ’ which allows us to go about the district in which we

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reside, but we are forbidden to go more than 500 yards away from it.

“ We sign our names, and are told that once a fortnight we must come to D—— to get our cards stamped at the mairie, and answer the roll-call.

“ I think that this hateful roll-call was one of the most humiliating episodes in my captivity. It reminded me that I was a prisoner and treated as one. Hickel always gave the order to line up, and he always remembered to say ‘ Left, right ! ’

“ One day we were told that women were required to help nurse the German wounded who had come from Soissons and Fourmies. Another day we heard that help was urgently needed for washing and mending the soldiers’ clothes. Nobody volunteered, and in consequence we were threatened that, if we persisted in refusing, we should be forced to do what was required. I lived in perpetual fear ; I always dreaded lest I might be taken away from Jeanne, and so lose my

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only consolation—that of talking about Lille and my loved ones.”

The déportées nearly always found Hickel at the mairie when they went there every fortnight.

“Hickel *terrifies* me. Whenever I see him I want to hide. I feel he is all-powerful. He is the Commandant's nephew. His comrades mention him with mingled awe and admiration. ‘Oh, hasn't M. Hickel been well brought up!’”

His behaviour is quite the reverse. He calls all the girls by their Christian names; he is most familiar, and never loses a chance of talking to Marie. He does this in a horrible way: he bends down and puts his face very close to hers.

“The day when I was obliged to undergo the medical examination I had one continual struggle to protect my modesty from Hickel's disgusting curiosity. We were having dinner in the hen-house about six weeks after our visit to V——, when suddenly we heard the

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village policeman calling out that we were to go to D—— next day to be medically examined. He also told the peasants to prepare to have some soldiers billeted on them, and we always think there was some sinister connection between our medical examination and the arrival of these soldiers. The policeman furthermore told us that the Major had asked for a private room, a long table, two chairs, some pillows, a basin, and plenty of hot water.”

Marie and Jeanne have already heard the horrible intimate details of these examinations. Those who refused to submit were taken either to the guard-house or else to prison. It is said that two girls were forcibly undressed by the police, and were then made to stand naked in front of them and the Major.

“ We were so upset by the order that we couldn't eat any more dinner. When we went to bed we passed a dreadful night.” More than a year afterwards Marie remem-

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bered that night. "I couldn't sleep at first, and when at last, worn out by sheer fatigue, I closed my eyes, I dreamed horrible dreams which were worse than my waking thoughts. I was back in Lille once more. Mamma had gone out of her mind through grief. When I ran to kiss her she didn't know me, she pushed me away, and asked me where her daughter had gone!"

On the following day the victims assembled in the school-house at D——. "The Major is shut in the 'private' room. My friends go in one by one, then they sign their names in a book to show that they have 'been examined. Hickel sees to all this, but, when my turn comes, he follows me into the room. His big cigar is in his mouth, and he smiles a dreadful smile. He closes the door behind him. The Major bids me undress myself.

"I look at Hickel: 'I can't undress before this gentleman.'

"The Major doesn't attach the slightest

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importance to my remark, but waits for me to conform to his wishes.

“ I say timidly, ‘ This gentleman did not come in during the other examinations; why must he be present when it is my turn ? ’

“ The Major lightly shrugs his shoulders. Hickel listens, greatly amused. The two men say something in German. Their conversation seems to afford them food for mirth. They simply rock with laughter.

“ The Major repeats his order. I make the same reply : ‘ No ! I *can't* undress before this gentleman.’

“ The Major says a few words to Hickel, who flings himself out of the room in a very bad temper.

“ The examination is over. I feel so ashamed that I want to hide ! But when I go to ‘ sign,’ Hickel is seated at the table in place of the soldier who, until now, has witnessed the signatures. He smiles very kindly, and asks me my name, my age, whether I'm married or single. All of which

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he already knows, as outside the front door of Lille Villa we, like all the other émigrés, have nailed up a placard giving full particulars about ourselves. Then, handing me the pen, he whispers, 'My treasure, sign your name—do you see? Just *here*.'

"I tremble so much that I can hardly write. Hickel leans over me, I feel his breath on my neck, he's just like a crouching beast, and when I give the pen back to him, he has the impudence to say :

" 'My little darling! Tell me when can I come and see you? '

"I make no answer; he turns to the soldier: 'She's very naughty, but she has a heart of gold.' "

CHAPTER IV

THE WAY OF A GERMAN.

HICKEL at once proceeds to carry out his intentions. Nearly every day, under pretext of going his rounds, he goes to V—— and calls at Lille Villa.

“ Directly I hear the sound of his horse’s hoofs, directly I see him, I am frightened to death. When Jeanne is there it isn’t quite so bad, but often (as Hickel knows only too well) I am left alone. Jeanne has either gone to fetch the milk or else she is washing our clothes by the river.

“ Hickel comes in ; he sits down on our only chair, he stretches out his long legs on our wooden bench, he puffs at his big cigar. ‘ Good morning, you dear little thing. Are you quite well ? ’

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“ I throw the door and the windows wide open. The windows are very low, and it will therefore be quite easy to jump out if Hickel attempt to molest me during Jeanne’s absence, but I shall be helpless once I am at the mercy of the German. To scream—to call? Nobody would take any notice. Who on earth would dare interfere between an officer and an émigrée? Hickel knows this. The day when his passions are ripe it will be quite easy to gratify them. For the time being he pays me foolish compliments, or else scolds me in a half-jesting manner :

“ ‘ My treasure, why *are* you so naughty? Are you *always* going to be naughty? ’

“ I don’t answer. Hickel puts the fear of death on me. I complain of having been carried away from my home; I ask if I shall stay here for long. Hickel grins and shrugs his shoulders. I can’t tell him to go. I can’t turn him out; it’s impossible! The Germans do exactly as they please. At

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last he rises. This 'well brought up' young man is really impudent. He inspects our room, he looks at the engravings from *L'Illustration* with which we have adorned our walls, and he stops before the bed, remarking in a tone full of significant meaning :

“ ‘ My treasure, is your bed comfortable ? Do you sleep well, mademoiselle ? My dear little girl, it isn't good for you to sleep alone.’

“ A piece of work is lying on the table, he picks it up and looks at it, he pries into my small belongings. His questions at first made me blush with shame, but now I am so angry that I want to snatch away what he is holding, I want to shriek aloud, ‘ Will you leave my things alone !’

“ At last he goes, saying, ‘ Au revoir, my treasure !’

“ He mounts his horse. My heart ceases to beat so wildly. I am saved for to-day.

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But what will happen to-morrow? Will he come back again? "

Jeanne is pestered by one of the police. She does not know how to avoid him. He is a big, awkward, fair man, young, married, and the father of five children. When he knows my friend is alone, he comes in, he tries to kiss her, to make her sit on his knee, and to overwhelm her with caresses.

"Pretty little French girl," he says, "you are charming, mademoiselle."

One morning Jeanne is dressing; she is clad only in her chemise and petticoat. The man enters without knocking. At the sound of his footsteps Jeanne turns round. He is quite close, and he seizes her! With a violent effort she frees herself, jumps out of the window, and rushes to take refuge with a neighbour. It is impossible to describe the continual state of terror produced by such an existence.

"The fear of being assaulted by a German was the thing we most dreaded," Marie

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told me. "We didn't care if we did not have enough to eat, we didn't mind doing the hardest work; one idea obsessed us, the haunting terror of seduction, and we used to tremble if we heard an unusual noise or a strange voice. But we were not the most to be pitied.

"At B——, a village quite close to us, a hundred and fifty women are lodged or, to speak more correctly, penned up in a granary. They sleep on bundles of straw, and are eaten up with lice. But in this place of shame a system of prostitution is publicly recognised and arranged by the German authorities. Every evening soldiers come and stand at the granary door, and call out the names of those women with whom they intend to pass the night.

"'Charlotte L., three bars of chocolate!
Come here!'

"'Louise G., it's your turn; you will have one mark and a bar of chocolate!'"

The miserable, helpless girls get up from

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the foetid straw where they are lying, and meekly follow those who call them, and who force them nightly to drink the cup of degradation to the dregs.

To excuse themselves, the Germans say that all the female prisoners are loose women. *They lie.* It is true that the Germans carried off decent women and street girls; but they knew exactly which prisoners were moral and which were not.

“One of the most painful incidents of my captivity was to feel that the country people shunned me because they believed what the Germans had said and took me for a prostitute. Even tiny children, the sound of whose voices used to bring tears to my eyes when I heard them calling ‘Mother,’ because the name reminded me so much of darling mamma, even these little ones used to accost me with hurtful words: ‘Take care! She’s a filthy woman who belongs to the Germans.’

“‘*A filthy woman who belongs to the*

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Germans! It was impossible to make them understand otherwise. My miserable room was my only refuge. There at least I could hide myself."

This pitiful confession is rendered all the more poignant *because the speaker is only a girl of twenty!*

CHAPTER V

“WOMEN’S WORK”

Two months have elapsed since Marie was carried off by the Germans. She has not been able to let her parents know any details of her life or her whereabouts. “How dreadful it must be for them not to know what has become of me!”

The days pass slowly. The Commandant T. (who has dared to state that there is not sufficient work for the *déportées*) is put on the “retired” list, and replaced in June by another officer. The statement that he ordered a farm to be burnt because the farmer had hidden three French soldiers there was not true. He erred on the side of leniency, and his humanity constituted his chief offence with those in command.

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But his successor is free from all the virtues which hamper the career of a true son of Kultur.

The Commandant F. is a brutal despot. He was chosen with great care. Tall and well built, with a massive forehead, he displays, on every possible occasion, a violent temper, kept slightly under control by the exigencies of strict military discipline.

From the moment of his arrival the captives realise what manner of man he is. "One Friday afternoon the village policeman passes, ringing his bell, and calling out that the Commandant has decided that we are to work on Sunday."

This order astonishes the prisoners. "Work on Sunday! Impossible! One always rests on Sunday." But very soon they become aware of their foolishness.

"During all the period of my captivity we always (the first month alone excepted) worked on Sundays, as well as on weekdays. We couldn't even snatch half an

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hour to hear Low Mass.” In vain the women protest; they only receive one answer: ‘It is the order of the Commandant. The harvest is late; it is impossible to stop work.’

“The order to go into the fields,” said Marie, “was given at noon. We passed the remainder of the day in preparing some kind of outfit for field labour. We made caps from handkerchiefs; we even made ourselves shoes.” In the confusion of departure, Marie and Jeanne had not brought a second pair with them, so the girls have only the pretty walking shoes with Louis XV. heels which they wore on the morning of their abduction. The country women, who have not been able to buy any shoes since the invasion, show them how to make slippers out of plaited string and pieces of stuff. These they gladly manufacture, and most gratefully wear.

“At seven o’clock on Sunday we are ready, our ‘uniform’ a blouse and a petti-

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coat, a cap on our heads, and our bare feet thrust in our home-made shoes. (We had only one pair of stockings each, which we hoarded jealously, knowing that we should never be able to replace them.)

“The workers are gathered together in the village market-place. They number twenty. A soldier (‘the patrol’) marches them away to a meadow, and remains there to superintend the work. If haymaking is essentially picturesque and enjoyable when one romps about and picnics in a hayfield, it is a very different matter when one has to toil from seven in the morning until dusk, with only a quarter of an hour’s rest at noon and an hour’s rest in the afternoon. Eleven hours of solid work !”

For Marie and her companions in misfortune haymaking does not produce any feelings of enjoyment ; on the contrary, it merely signifies unhappiness and bodily suffering.

“When I came back in the evening I was

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so exhausted that I could not eat ; I threw myself on our bed. I only wanted to sleep. Impossible ! I was much too tired. Oh, how many sleepless nights I have passed ! When it was time to get up I felt more fatigued than when I went to bed. I seemed as if I had been beaten all over ; my very bones ached. I couldn’t move my arms or legs without groaning with pain, but, nevertheless, I was always obliged to work.

“ After a few days Jeanne obtained permission from Hickel for one of us to remain at home during the morning, to see to things generally and to prepare our food. Jeanne suggested that I should stop, *but I was so terrified at the idea of being alone in the house that I much preferred to work in the fields.*”

The summer months slipped away in one long, uninterrupted period of labour. The hay harvest was followed by the corn harvest. Then, after many weeks of exile, Marie begins to think her situation is indeed desperate. Her fear of remaining in slavery

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for the duration of the war has become a certainty.

“ I said to myself : *It is finished.* I shall never, never return to Lille; I shall never see my parents again ; I shall be dead with grief and fatigue long before peace is signed.”

In a sort of stupor of infinite weariness she works like a mere machine. Misery and toil are responsible for this. Dark and dreadful days come when her will-power gradually grows more and more enfeebled, when her suffering soul becomes a prey to morbid grief ; there are dreadful days of pain when happy remembrances of the past vanish and the promise of the future gradually fades away. The prisoners only live in the unhappy present. They now understand the heart's bitterness; they know the utter weariness of the struggle for life. All their courage has left them.

“ It must be said that the work which is given us becomes harder and harder. The sheaves of corn are very heavy. We have

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to lift them up with a fork and put them in the waggon, and sometimes we have to wait a few minutes holding the sheaves in the air until the waggon comes. In consequence of pressing the handle of the fork constantly against my side I have hurt myself internally. I also sprained myself once miscalculating my distance ; but still I was obliged to work. And only to think how at home I used to go to bed if my head ached, and how mamma used to send for the doctor for my slightest ailment ! ”

The sun beats down on the shoulders of the miserable girls ; they feel their skins blister and burn through their thin chemises—there isn’t a particle of shade anywhere.

“ Even when it rains there is still no rest for us. We have to take the corn which has been gathered and put it in the threshing machine. We hand up the sheaves ever so quickly. The dust produced by the threshing machine is suffocating. There are moments when I can’t breathe, when I

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think I am dying. *What makes me so utterly depressed is the knowledge that I am suffering all this pain and fatigue for the Germans, to feed them and enable them to prolong their resistance.*"

One day Hickel, going his rounds, sees me standing by the machine.

"You are taking life very easily," he says.

"This unjust remark so angers me that for the first time since I have known Hickel I dare oppose him: 'I should like to see *you* doing my work.'

"'All right, then, I will, silly child; you are giving yourself the airs of a martyr.'

"He takes my place, he feeds the machine, but as he is soon obliged to make haste he bustles and blusters; he is scarlet in the face, large drops of perspiration run down his cheeks. He stops suddenly, and, motioning me to return to my duties, says, mopping his face, 'It's more tiring than one thinks.'

“WOMEN’S WORK”

“He jumps on his horse and rides off, whistling.

“The corn once safely in, we have to help with the oats. The weather, which until now has been nearly always fine, becomes unsettled. This adds to our troubles, as directly it begins to rain we have to run and lift up the sheaves, which we place in groups of six or eight; then, at the first glimpse of the sun, we have to run and arrange them singly to dry.”

The Commandant often comes and watches the girls. Like most Germans, he seems to derive a great deal of enjoyment in making himself thoroughly hated. He succeeds only too well. The prisoners never hear the sound of his horse’s hoofs in the great stillness of the country without positively shaking with fear. He comes. The oats are ready put up in bundles. What does he mean to do? With infinite malice he walks his horse between the sheaves, scattering them in his passage, and, when he has destroyed

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the result of a whole day's labour in a few minutes, he says :

“ Do this all over again to-night after eight o'clock ! ”

Rebellion surges in the breasts of the unhappy girls. But *do* they rebel? *No!* They know how helpless they are ; they only bow their heads and—submit.

How can they do otherwise? Those who oppose the authorities are taken first to the Kommandantur and then to prison. “ One of the schoolrooms is now a prison, the floor is covered with straw ; men and women are shut up there together—I can only add, *even at night*. They get a little bread and rice to eat. During the day they work in the fields, guarded by soldiers who threaten to shoot them if they refuse to work. The women are forced to clean the soldiers' quarters and to wash their linen. All the time the soldiers laugh at them and the sufferings of France. *Those who persist in refusing are tortured.* ”

“ WOMEN'S WORK ”

“ The entire world knows that the Germans believe in terrorising their enemies, for is not theirs the doctrine of Frightfulness? The most salutary punishment in their eyes is that which is the most terrible. *We know this*, and we hear with sick horror the method of torture adopted by certain commandants with rebellious slaves. *They are put in a cellar in water up to their knees, and left there for so many hours every day until they consent to work.* This expression of Kultur is looked upon by the Germans as productive of excellent results.

“ When I returned to Lille I was told that one of my cousins, who was acting as interpreter, was asked by a friend in the office to post a letter on his way home. In the invaded territory it is absolutely forbidden to post a letter for anyone. The police met my cousin, searched him, found the letter, and took him to prison.

“ Here he was treated as a spy. He was sentenced to be put in a cellar half full

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of water, and to stop there for a fortnight!

“My cousin was preserved from this fate thanks to a most fortuitous circumstance. He happened to be using a very inferior quality of soap which had set up a skin eruption, and his body was covered with horrible spots. The Germans thought that something dreadful ailed him, and, as they have a wholesome dread of illness, he was sent to the hospital, where, for many weeks, the Major vainly tried to discover the nature of the disease. My cousin always thought he was saved by a miracle. But then he knew what this torture signified—*he had remained for a whole day and night in the icy water of the cellar.*”

CHAPTER VI

THE TERROR BY NIGHT

TOWARDS the middle of August a section of troops passed through the village. These were the Engineers. All night they made a great deal of noise with their horses, their camp kitchens, and the army waggons which contained their boats.

“ It was impossible to get any sleep. But next day all was quiet again. Occupied with their duties, the Engineers watered their horses, washed their clothes, and cut wood for their fires. The cook, for some reason or other, remained at V——. He was a fat little dark man—horribly ugly ; one might have thought that he had accidentally been boiled in one of his own coppers, so flabby and bleached was his flesh. The prisoners

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nicknamed him 'Calf's Head.' All day he ogled the women, and he seemed to find me and my friend particularly to his taste. He leered at us, saying, 'Pretty little girls, nice little mademoiselles.'

"He easily found out where we were living, and, reading the placard outside our door, he exclaimed, 'Ha, ha! Two young ladies alone. How *dreadful!*'"

"We pretended not to hear him, and, seeing that we ignored his compliments, he offered us some sugar and some coffee. Since our captivity we had not seen either the one or the other. We were dreadfully tempted to accept, but with great dignity we refused. He therefore, under our very eyes, gave the sugar to one of the horses."

The girls go to bed. They have been asleep some hours when, a little before midnight, Marie is awakened by hearing someone lightly tapping the glass of the window. She shakes her friend.

"Wake up, Jeanne. Do you hear that?"

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It must be the cook!" She is right. A deep voice says very distinctly :

"Mademoiselle, open the door."

The two girls, speechless with terror, are clasped in each other's arms. The cook goes to the other window and recommences his manœuvres.

"Quick, mademoiselle! I want to come in."

He sits outside on the window-sill; he glues his face against the panes; he tries to make out what is happening inside the room. He goes to the door and tries the handle. Luckily, the door is bolted on the inside. The man goes back to the window and rattles it angrily. Marie and Jeanne hear him always repeating the same words :

"Open quickly! I want to come in."

Up to four in the morning the cook keeps the young girls in a continual state of fear. Every moment they think he will smash the glass and effect an entrance.

"What memories! We held each other

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so tightly that I could feel Jeanne's heart beating against mine. I saw her face in the moonlight: it was blanched with fear, and her eyes were terrified. We dared not move. From time to time Jeanne whispered, 'Is he still there?'

"I replied under my breath, 'Yes.'

"I didn't know whether I was awake or the victim of a horrible nightmare."

Shortly after this experience another vile incident occurred. In May, consequent upon a military order, the Mayor notified the déportées that they could make a list of those things which they most needed, and such lists would be sent to their families. "One day they inform us that our long-awaited-for parcels have arrived. The distribution takes place in the street; the parcels are piled up on the waggon in which they have come, and a soldier hands them to the recipients."

Hickel presides at the distribution. The girls, very naturally, press round the waggon,

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anxious to see what there is for them. Jeanne and Marie are well to the front.

In his grating voice Hickel cries :

“ I forbid you to touch.”

“ I was not touching anything,” says the young girl quietly ; “ I was only looking.”

Hickel's lips tremble with rage—his whip is in his hand, he raises his arm, the whip passes so close to them that it actually touches Marie and Jeanne's hair. The young girls feel the air rush past their faces. The whip hits a wall and breaks off some of the plaster.

“ Fortunately we are both ‘ little ’ girls,” says Marie, “ and Hickel hasn't aimed at all well.”

The distribution continues. Hickel recovers his temper.

“ One of my companions receives an enormous parcel. She is so pleased that she literally jumps for joy. Hickel, in playful mood, catches hold of her round the waist and dances with her. When my turn comes

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to receive my parcel, Hickel, who only a moment before wished to thrash me, now stretches out his arm and wants to waltz with me. I run away, and Hickel, half vexed, half laughing, shouts out what he evidently considers to be a playful reproach :

“ ‘ Naughty, naughty little French girl.’ ”

CHAPTER VII

THE DAWN OF HOPE

OUR friends had just finished marking off the fourth month of their captivity on the calendar when a rumour spreads through all the villages in the Ardennes :

“ The déportées are going to be repatriated.”

Marie is not amongst the first to return to Lille. The sight of the happiness of others makes her own fate seem harder than before.

“ I wish them all a happy journey, but what misery for me still to remain in exile ! In imagination I travel with my friends to Lille. Their loved ones are waiting for them. I think of the happiness of their reunion, and I weep bitterly. However,

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Hermann, one of the soldiers who is going back in charge of the girls, has consented to take a letter to my parents."

Hermann acted as patrol in the fields where Marie was working, and, like most Germans, had a pocket-book crammed with photographs which he was always ready to show the prisoners.

"One day he showed me a photograph of his wife, a pretty little woman, not at all like a German 'frau.' He told me that she had been a Red Cross nurse, but had eloped with an officer, and quite by chance he had discovered that the lovers were living at Lille. Hermann was mad to confront them, and in order to do this he had obtained permission to take ex-prisoners back."

During the absence of the soldier, Marie lives in a state of over-excitement.

"I only think of Hermann and his promise. I worry over a thousand possibilities. Will he have time to see my parents? Has

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he really understood where they live? Will he be able to find the house? What news will he bring? Is my brother still ill, or have the Germans carried him off?"

At last, one evening, after five days of interminable waiting, Marie sees a soldier coming down the road in the light of the setting sun. It is he—the messenger.

"No doubt he has kept his word. My heart beats as if it would break. I run to meet him. He holds a parcel in his hand. He recognises me and, without keeping me in suspense, says, 'A letter from papa and mamma—and a little parcel.'

"I ask him all sorts of questions, repeating myself ten times over. I don't even listen at first to what he is saying. Then I hear, 'Mamma always crying—won't even speak to me; but papa very pleased, very good to me. On mantelpiece, photograph of little mademoiselle. I recognised who it was at once. I tell papa, "Mademoiselle is well and will soon come home."' "

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“ He gives me the parcel and the letter.”

Marie runs off with her prize. The parcel contains all kinds of treasures, including some much-needed linen.

“ How happy I am! In handling every object I think, ‘Mamma touched *this*; yesterday’ it was in her very own hands.’

“ In the letter my parents express their joy at hearing from me, as they had no idea what had happened to me since my abduction. My brother is still at home, and I am so glad that I have been taken and he has been left. I know he could never have undergone so much fatigue. The letter also tells me some news which makes me very sad. One of my dearest friends, a girl of twenty, is dead. She lived in a village near Lille. Her parents asked permission for her to see a specialist, but at the Kommandantur they were told that the German Major would visit the invalid himself, and then see if it was necessary to call in a specialist.

“ The Major came after a long and fatal

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delay. He said he would attend my friend himself. The next day she was dead! My parents concluded by saying that a number of déportées were being sent back to the villages from which they had been taken. Whenever a fresh convoy arrived my father went to the railway station, hoping always to bring me home to mamma. What disillusion when he repeatedly came back alone! However, papa never lost hope. He kept on agitating for my return, and Monsignor Charost never ceased interceding with the authorities for the repatriation of us all."

In September Marie's happy dreams seemed likely to be realised.

"The Mayor told me that my name was on a list which he had just received. What joy! Only a little while longer to wait!

"We were feeding the threshing machine when the Mayor told me this good news. I am happy, I laugh, I sing. My friends all soon hope to be repatriated; we can only

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talk of our return ; we work sustained by Hope.”

But the days pass ; the captives still continue their lives of toil. Why is this ?

“ I am so unhappy. I dare not approach the Commandant ; but one afternoon Hickel passes on horseback. I ask him to stop. It is the first time that I have ever spoken to him of my own accord, and he is highly delighted, as he thinks I am going to treat him differently. He expands, he smiles, and I laugh inwardly to think of his discomfiture when he knows what I am really going to say.

“ ‘ M. Hickel, when will there be another departure of émigrées for Lille ? ’

“ I was mistaken in believing that I had snubbed him. He still continues to smile. ‘ My little heart—not before October. We want the railways for the transport of troops and munitions.’

“ Then, noticing my disconsolate look, ‘ Aren’t you happy here with us ? We are

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not all Huns, however much you seem to think so.' .

“ I am so miserable that I cannot answer. I hardly notice what he is saying, it is so like his usual manner of expressing himself :

“ ‘ My treasure, why on all the earth *are* you so naughty ? I love you, you naughty little French girl ! ’ ”

CHAPTER VIII

“ PITY THE POOR RUSSIANS ! ”

BOWED down to the earth, burnt by the sun, drenched to the skin with rain, the captives continue their unceasing toil. Not far from them some Russian prisoners are working ; they are all companions in misery.

“ Oh, the poor, poor Russians ! They are much more to be pitied than ourselves, for they are treated far worse. The morning when we arrive they have already been at work a long time.”

. Great white and black oxen draw the plough. These oxen come from Germany because all the horses in the Ardennes have been requisitioned. The Russians treat the beasts kindly and talk to them tenderly in low tones.

“PITY THE POOR RUSSIANS!”

“These poor Russians! They make us feel very pitiful; they are all ages. Some are quite young, boys with an artless expression. Others are old, or at least they appear so. Their cheeks are hollow. Their long beards are often nearly white, and their cracked lips seem stretched over their teeth.

“I remember one old man (he was really only about forty-five). His grey hair was a mass of curls. He kept indicating various heights with his hand; thus he made me understand that he had three children. Tears were in his eyes. He said to me, ‘Little ones, madame, my little ones.’”

The German soldiers treat these poor creatures like dogs, beating them with sticks and the butt ends of their muskets. They are almost in rags; their boots are full of holes. Many go bare-foot, and we make them rough shoes like those we are wearing. They are horribly dirty, but, surely, that is no fault of theirs. They sleep huddled together on bundles of straw; the Germans

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give them nothing with which to clean themselves, but still this doesn't prevent them from remarking in disgusted accents, 'These Russians are worse than pigs.' "

With a touching gesture as old as Time, the Russians raise their hands to their mouths, trying to make their fellow-captives understand that they are dying of hunger.

"So, whenever the sentinels are kindly disposed, we give the Russians bread and butter and eggs. Sometimes we give these starving creatures cigars which we have bought. They are in such a hurry to eat that they literally throw themselves like wild beasts on the food and devour it in a few mouthfuls. They thank us with smiles and movements of their heads; they offer us rings which they have made, and which we accept in order not to hurt their feelings. Occasionally we were tempted to give them a little money, but we soon gave up doing this. The Boches stole it from them at once."

“PITY THE POOR RUSSIANS!”

But the French captives had very little money themselves. The Germans don't pay for the prisoners' labour; they “feed” them instead.

“Our food consists of rice, beans, and a little lard. It is totally insufficient; we have to supplement it ourselves with milk and eggs.* The eggs are large and cheap; a pint of good milk only costs 10 centimes [a penny], and an egg is the same price. Notwithstanding this, the dreadful day arrives when our purse is empty.”

* To be absolutely correct, one must add that the farmer's wife supplied us with a quart of milk daily. Every three weeks the Mayor was told to provide us with a small bag of flour, about half a peck.

CHAPTER IX

AGONY

SEPTEMBER passes and sheds its leaves ; the girls are beginning to suffer from the cold under the bleak skies of the Ardennes, and Marie despairs of ever regaining her freedom.

“ To add to my sorrows, Hickel becomes more and more persistent. I must not close my eyes until daybreak, when I can hear the peasants moving about and the cattle going to graze. I always think that Hickel or even one of his friends will never dare to come to our bedroom after it is light ! But these sleepless nights caused by fear are nerve-racking.”

Just now V—— and the adjacent villages are full of troops from Verdun.

“ The soldiers have only to read the

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placard nailed outside our door to know that two young girls are inside! We are horribly afraid.

These fears are not imaginary. One woman in a village near V—— escaped clad only in a chemise from a soldier who forcibly entered her bedroom.

“ There is hardly an evening when someone does not tap at our windows. Who can it be? We dare not ask; it seems less dangerous to feign sleep. The steps retreat; has the man gone? No; he comes back, he taps at the window again, he is very obstinate, he kicks the door with his heavy boots. The wood cracks. Oh, if it should give way! I jump out of bed, I go stealthily to the door to make sure it is bolted, I take care not to stumble in the dark, as the slightest noise might only serve to increase the man’s desires. I am so frightened: *I understand now what it means to die of fright.* I couldn’t escape even if the worst threatened. My legs are giving way under

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me. At last the man loses patience. Jeanne goes to sleep again, but I watch and wait. Some moments of silence—then fresh footsteps—a voice! I believe I recognise the voice of Hickel. I wake Jeanne: 'Here he is—I'm sure it is he!' 'No,' she answers, 'it's far more likely to be the policeman. He is going up into the granary—he'll try and get in that way.'

"We listen in terrible suspense, hardly daring to breathe. Oh, God! It is the Boches. They are passing in front of our window: we see their silhouettes clearly outlined against the light of the electric lamp they carry. Presently they return. The farmer and his wife are behind them; the Germans have routed them out of bed. The man wears his cotton nightcap, his wife has her nightcap tied under the chin with a draw-string—altogether a comic 'ensemble'! The peasant and the Boches go in the stable. After all, it's only to commandeer something!

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“ We go back to bed ; for half an hour I can breathe, I can rest in peace ! Then comes another noise. This time it is the rats gnawing the wood in the stables or else in our room. Now—there’s a cry in the darkness ! Again I am overcome with terror and am utterly exhausted when I get up next morning. I say to myself, ‘ I can’t go on living like this ; I shall go mad, or else I shall be seriously ill,’ and I think, *‘So much the better—if I die I shall not suffer any longer.’* ”

The soldiers have not only thrown the inhabitants of the villages into a state of panic, but have taken away nearly all there is to eat. There is no more milk, butter, or eggs. The émigrées are very hungry. Driven by want, Marie and Jeanne steal potatoes out of the fields.

“ This is expressly forbidden. If anyone is caught it means prison ! We slink out at 10 o’clock, after the patrol has passed, in order to get safely back before the

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second patrol goes his rounds about midnight.”

The roads are very hilly ; the girls creep along. They come to the river ; a curtain of kindly trees hides them. At last they reach the fields.

“ Oh, what terrors ! The least noise makes us start and tremble ; the trees take all sorts of ghostly shapes in the night. A shadow falls across the ground—can it be the patrol ? We have brought a small bag and a knife—quick, quick ! We dig up some plants, we pull the potatoes off them, then we put the plants back into the ground so that it doesn't look as if anyone had touched them. We shouldn't like the peasants to be fined for our depredations.

“ One night we are surprised by the patrol. Two policemen on bicycles overtake us. We never heard them ! We throw our bags into a thicket. They call out, ‘ Halt ! What are you doing here at this time of night ? Where do you come from ? Pro-

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duce your identification cards! You are not in the commune where you belong.'

"Jeanne, who has more self-possession than I have, pleads ignorance. She explains that we have only come out for a breath of fresh air, and that we have gone farther than we intended. The police declare that they must report us at the Kommandantur. The next day the Mayor informs us that we have been sentenced to a couple of days' imprisonment. This maddens me. Prison! I can't bear the thought. However, I don't know to what we owe our good fortune, but no one comes to arrest us."

CHAPTER X

IN WINTER

OCTOBER of this year is particularly wet. The melancholy weather adds to the sadness of the captives, and the Germans still impose most arduous work upon them.

“ They now make us grub up potatoes. I never imagined that any occupation could be so distasteful. Those who have never done this cannot imagine what it feels like to be bent almost double all day, to dig one’s hands into the damp and heavy clay soil, to feel our hair and our clothes gradually getting wet through ; very often we haven’t a dry thread on us.”

The persistent wet weather is a blessing in disguise.

“ It is impossible to continue our potato-grubbing, so it is decided that we are to be

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put back to threshing corn. We congratulate ourselves! Certainly in the barn we have to put up with dust, rats and mice; but, thank Heaven! at any rate we are under cover."

The winter approaches. The cold is intense. At Lille Villa there have been no fires for fifteen years, so in consequence it is extremely damp. The moment the stove is lit the very walls weep. The girls have only been given thin blankets, so they pile their clothes on their bed to get a little extra warmth—even then they freeze. The icy wind whistles down the chimney and rushes in through the badly-fitting windows. It is quite dark at seven o'clock.

"We leave off work at half-past six. We have our supper. Shall we go to bed? No! It's far too early! At last we contrive a primitive lamp with some plaited cotton and an old jam jar, into which we put a little melted lard. The light is feeble and the smell is most unpleasant, but by this time we are not fastidious. Until eight

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o'clock, when it is obligatory to extinguish all lights, or at least to darken one's windows, we manage to see to read. An old lady, one of our neighbours, has lent us some books, and occasionally, when it is exceptionally cold in our bedroom, she invites us to spend the evening with her."

These are pleasant times. Mme. G. has a son at the front. Since the beginning of the war she has had no news of him. Is he wounded? Is he dead? The hopes and yearnings of this mother bereft of her son are absolutely in sympathy with these girls bereft of their parents.

"We talk of Lille and the war, and whenever we are more than usually downhearted good Mme. G. speaks words of hopeful encouragement :

" ' Don't fret, my children, you will soon return home. I *know* that you will be included in the first batch of déportées.' "

"She knows nothing whatever about it, but we like to believe that she does ! "

CHAPTER XI

TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY

THIS sad month of October brought Marie two pieces of good news. It was rumoured in the village that Hickel, who had been convalescing at the base for some months, was about to return to the front.

“ My companions, who hate and more or less mistrust him, are well pleased, but their pleasure cannot possibly equal my joy. To be free from him ! To hear his voice no more, never again to tremble when he comes near me ! His departure takes place one Thursday. It rains hard that morning ; it’s impossible to attend to the potatoes. It is also impossible to thresh corn ; there is no petrol for the threshing machine. The prisoners rejoice at this enforced idleness.”

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About 10 o'clock Hickel appears. He is as nimble as ever. With well-waxed moustache well-brilliantined hair, and well-varnished boots he drives up to Lille Villa. He enters.

"Good morning, my little dears. I've come to say good-bye. I hope you won't be naughty to-day."

The girls feign ignorance.

"You are going away?"

"Yes, I am going back to the front to-morrow."

Marie's joy is so great, when she realises what she has heard is true, that she exclaims:

"*What luck!*"

"Well, you really *are* naughty," says Hickel.

Thereupon he gets up and comes close to Marie.

"I may possibly be killed in a few days; won't you give me one kiss before I go?"

Marie recoils from him and stands with her back to the wall so as to avoid any possible contact with this odious man.

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“ I kiss *you* ! ” she cries. “ *Never* ! ”

Hickel looks discomfited ; he withdraws, but he soon regains his self-confidence, and says :

“ Well, good-bye, you nice, naughty little French girl.. I don't *really* want a kiss.”

“ The following Sunday,” Marie told me, “ we are on our way to the barn after dinner* when we see the Mayor. He is on horse-back, and he beckons us. Jeanne and I run towards him.

“ ‘ Mademoiselle,’ he says, addressing me, ‘ get your things ready. You are leaving for Lille to-morrow. A cart will fetch you at six in the morning.’

“ Happiness certainly tends to make one selfish. I run back to the house so full of my own joy that at first I never stop to pity my poor friend, who weeps because she is not coming with me. But soon I notice her tears. I go and find Johann, the

* “ Dinner ” in the North of France means the midday meal.

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patrol. I ask him as a great favour to let my friend off work this Sunday afternoon.

“Johann, a big, lean man, refuses point-blank. ‘No, no! Mlle. Jeanne must come to work at once.’

“I persist, I beg him to let us be together during the short time I have to remain at V—. Johann won’t give way. I go back to the house, but, on hearing of Johann’s refusal, my friend completely loses her temper.

“‘Let him come and fetch me, then. I’ll stay with you.’

“An hour has barely passed when we hear someone shouting outside our door. It is Johann. He thumps on the door with his big stick :

“‘Mademoiselle Jeanne! Quick, quick, mademoiselle!’

“My friend doesn’t answer. Johann enters, seizes Jeanne by the arm and shakes her: ‘Mademoiselle, if you won’t work, you’ll come with me at once to the Kommandantur.’

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“ Jeanne has no choice but to obey.

“ The afternoon slips quickly away. When work is over for the day, all the émigrés meet in our room. A young man and myself are the only persons who are being sent home from this commune. I am asked to execute a thousand commissions ; I am given a thousand messages for the loved ones at home.”

Night falls. The young girls go to bed, but Marie is far too happy to sleep. She rises at dawn, and gives a last look round the hen-house, where she has endured so many things. Jeanne, bathed in tears, accompanies her part of the way. “ I try to console her,” says Marie. “ I tell her that her turn will soon come. She doesn't seem to hear what I am saying. The young émigré, my travelling companion, hoists himself up in the cart where I am sitting ensconced on my luggage. A soldier accompanies us. Our number is gradually augmented by other prisoners who join us at various villages en route.

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“ At D—— the soldiers examine our luggage, because we are forbidden to take away any eatables, such as potatoes, butter, and eggs. Then we go into the mairie. A soldier is seated behind a table. Everything about him is round—his back, his nose, his face, and his spectacles.”

He examines a register which records the number of days on which the women have worked. He carefully adds to it the record of Marie's five months' labour ; he is a very scrupulous man who does not wish to wrong anyone. To each his due ! When he has finished he verifies each reckoning. At last he gives the young girl the money which is due to her. It is exactly nine francs forty centimes (seven shillings and tenpence) !

“ It is true,” adds Marie, “ that the price of the little bag of flour which was given us every three weeks must be added to this sum.”

The journey was tedious until Lille was

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reached. The travellers arrived there close on midnight. They were ordered to remain in the train until the following morning, when, about half-past eight, compartment after compartment began to discharge its load of captives.

“ My turn arrives soon after ten o'clock. Two officers read the roll-call, which we all answer. We then go out of the station. The boulevard is black with an agitated and cheering crowd. Everybody sees someone, now a relation, now a friend, but my anxious eyes do not light on any familiar face. No doubt papa had not been notified of my return. The delays are interminable, but I reach home at last! I see the well-known house, so high that it dwarfs all others near it. Curious faces are looking out of the windows. I keep on waving my hand—I am recognised! Mamma has just time to go down and open the door. In an instant I am in her arms; we weep whilst we embrace, then we laugh, then we begin

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to cry again. Mamma looks at me as if she cannot believe her eyes! I ask where papa is, and I hear that he has been waiting at the station ever since five this morning. We have missed each other in the crowd.

“ We go upstairs to our flat. Mamma is always looking at me. ‘ My poor darling,’ says she, ‘ in what a deplorable state of health you return to us. How thin you are! Your poor cheeks, your hollow eyes. Ah, what you must have suffered!’

“ In order to prevent her from breaking down again I try to laugh. ‘ Just see how beautifully I’m dressed, mamma. I have no stockings, my shoes are in holes, my dress is one mass of stains and rents. I look like a beggar.’

“ Whilst I am lunching off some good bouillon and an egg I hear my father’s voice. He is asking the neighbours, ‘ Is it true that Marie is here?’

“ ‘ Yes! Yes! it is true,’ I cry.

“ I rush towards him, but when he catches

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sight of me papa cannot move a step farther. His legs tremble, he has to lean against the wall to save himself from falling. I help him into the dining-room, and there we three embrace and weep tears of joy and thankfulness."

CHAPTER XII

AN EXCEPTIONAL CASE

SORROW and suffering usually leave ineffaceable marks, and for a long time the soul is completely overwhelmed with the memory of its tribulations. Marie is not able to take up her life. She passes hours in a state almost akin to torpor, her hands lying loosely in front of her—doing nothing—wrapped in thoughts of the past.

“I have even lost all interest in dress. Mamma tries to distract my mind. ‘You must read or work,’ she advises.

“I take up a book, a piece of work—useless! I can’t interest myself in either. My thoughts are far away; I am once more with Jeanne, my friend, my sister; I know how doubly bitter her servitude will be

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now that she is alone. I pity her from the bottom of my heart. Often I think I am back in the Ardennes, in the hands of the Huns. The sound of a tramway bell makes me start in terror, for it reminds me of that dreadful bell far away. Again I tremble to hear the Commandant's new order, and I always dread lest perhaps I may be taken away again."

In the month of January it was rumoured in Lille that there was likely to be a fresh deportation of women. Two months later we heard that several had been sent to Roumania. The Germans gave preference to those women who had worked during the preceding year. Marie's parents are terrified.

"If they send our child to Roumania it is all over—we shall never see her again."

"My father uses all the influence at his command to obtain my unconditional repatriation in France. It is relatively easy to arrange. I never was very strong at the best of times, and since my return I

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am suffering from the after-effects of the heavy work imposed on me. The doctor thinks it is possible that I may develop consumption. Directly the German authorities see my doctor's certificate they authorise me to leave Lille."

The day of her departure is here, and Marie feels that at last she is free. But one more trial is in store for her. At the station of Fives-Marchandies, where her train will start, she sees a woman with three tiny children who seem very tired. As they walk towards the platform Marie helps the mother to carry her small luggage. An officer notices the pretty young girl, and says to a soldier, "Go and help with madame's luggage." He then asks Marie slyly, "Is it madame *or* mademoiselle?"

Marie tries to avoid answering him, but the officer's curiosity is aroused.

"You are very young to travel alone. Show me your ticket, please."

A sentence is scrawled on the ticket. As

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Marie does not understand German she cannot read it.

The officer exclaims :

“ Yours is an exceptional case. I shall make a note of it. You have been deported and are now repatriated ! ”

He goes off to the inquiry office. Marie's heart is torn with apprehension. At the very moment when her prison door is open it seems likely to close on her again. “ I hastily go into my compartment, I cower in a corner. My travelling companions help to hide me by piling their rugs and parcels round me. The engine whistles. An officer runs down the platform looking in every compartment. The train moves—soon we are far away.”

The route is that over which Marie travelled in April, 1916. She recognises the villages and the stations through which she passed at that time.

“ At D—— I notice some of the émigrés who were abducted at the same time as

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myself. I call to them. They are dumb-founded at seeing me!

“ ‘Where are they taking you?’ they ask.

“ ‘I am not being “taken” anywhere. I’m going to Paris.’

“ My former friends at first shrug their shoulders incredulously, but at last they are convinced. ‘You are indeed lucky,’ they say, sighing deeply. And they turn away to wipe the tears from their eyes.”

Some days later Marie was at Annemasse. “Very often,” she told me, “people used to question me about my experiences, and they invariably concluded by saying, ‘What joy you must have felt when you were really back in France!’ I always answered:

“ ‘*Joy* is not the right word. I didn’t feel *joyful*.’

“What I really felt when I crossed the frontier is indescribable,” she confided to me; “it was something very sacred, very sweet, and very deep. The spirit of France dwelt within my heart.”

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I well remember the Sunday after my arrival in Paris. My brother, with whom I was staying, took me and my sister-in-law to a concert at the Trocadéro. I have always been passionately fond of music, but it now produced a singular effect on me. I cried bitterly the whole time the concert lasted.

“What!” I reflected, “how can these people possibly be so happy and contented? It seems as if they do not realise the horrors which are occurring daily in the invaded territory. They don't *understand* the tragedy of the occupation. *And it is all happening only a few hours away!*”

And to each mother who reads this record of suffering I put the same question:

“How would *you* feel if these things had happened to your own daughter?”

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*Text of the German Proclamation issued at
Lille, April, 1916.*

The English blockade is making the question of feeding the population more and more difficult.

In order to cope with the distress thereby produced, the German authorities recently called for voluntary workers on the land. This request has not met with a satisfactory response. In consequence, the inhabitants will be taken away by order of the authorities and sent into the country. The déportés will work in French territory at present in German occupation, but not near the fighting line; they will be employed in manual labour, but not in military duties.

This order has been made solely for the good of the population. In case of necessity the question of revictualment will be undertaken by the German food depôts. Each déporté will be allowed 30 kilos of luggage

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(cooking utensils and wearing apparel), and it will be advisable for people to make their preparations as soon as possible.

I therefore order :

No one is to make a change of residence until a fresh order is issued.

No one is to leave home between the hours of 9 o'clock at night and six o'clock in the morning (German time), unless granted special permission to do so.

As this order is final, it will be to the advantage of the population to remain calm and obedient.

THE COMMANDANT.

Lille, April, 1916.

Notice.

All inhabitants, with the exception of old people and children under fourteen years of age and their mothers, are ordered to prepare for deportation in an hour and a half.

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An officer will decide which persons will be taken to the appointed places.

To facilitate this, the occupants of houses are ordered to assemble in front of their dwellings, but in case of unfavourable weather they will be allowed to remain in the passages.

The doors of houses must be left open.

All complaints will be useless.

No persons living in a house (even those who are not to be deported) are to leave the house before eight a.m. (German time).

Each person will be allowed 30 kilos of luggage. If there is any excess weight, the luggage will be immediately confiscated. The packages must be done up separately, legibly addressed, and securely labelled. The label must bear the owner's Christian name and surname, also the number of his or her identification card.

It is necessary in the interests of the déportés to advise them to supply themselves with utensils for daily use, also a woollen wrap, good linen, and good shoes.

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Each person must produce an identification card.

Whoever tries to evade the rules of this order will be rigorously punished.

ETAPPEN, Kommandantur.

The latter notice was fixed on the houses chosen by the Commandant for the rape which took place on the nights of Friday and Saturday of Holy Week, 1916.

Protest of the Mayor of Lille

MONSIEUR LE GOUVERNEUR,—Confined to my house through illness, I have heard with feelings of indescribable emotion a certain rumour which I absolutely refuse to believe. I am told that the German authorities intend to transfer a large number of our civilian population to work on occupied territory.

After the official notices which you publicly displayed and which definitely asserted that, as the war did not concern civilians, the rights, goods and liberty of the population

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would be protected—*provided they did not oppose the authorities*—I should have imagined such a measure to be impossible.

If, however, I have been rightly informed, then I must ask you to allow me, as the first Magistrate in Lille, to lodge a strong formal protest against what I consider to be a violation of the recognised rights of civilians.

The execution of an order which will destroy homes, separate families, and carry off thousands of peaceful inhabitants, who will be consequently obliged to leave their worldly goods in an absolutely unprotected condition, will bring down universal reprobation upon those responsible.

Our soldiers, like your own, are bravely doing their duty, but all the International Conventions have agreed to leave the civil population outside this frightful conflict.

I venture to hope, your Excellency, that such a contingency as this will not really arise.

(Signed) DELESALLE, Mayor.

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Letter from a Lille Citizen's Wife

The following letter, from the wife of a highly respected citizen of Lille, was sent by its recipient to M. Jules Cambon, the French Ambassador, and General Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.* This is the pitiful record of an absolutely reliable eye-witness.

Lille, April 30th, 1916.

MY DEAR E.,—What I have to tell you is so sad and so terrible that I have not the heart to write it more than once. Please, therefore, read this letter and send it to those whom it will interest, letting it finally pass into the safe keeping of M.

MY DEAR M.,—We have just experienced (and especially during last week) three

* The Yellow Book (Livre Jaune, Annexe No. 13, p. 23). From reasons of prudence which it is not necessary to specialise, the Christian and surnames in this letter are indicated by initials only—a precaution also taken in other evidence contained in the Yellow Book.

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weeks of the most appalling mental agony which could be inflicted on the hearts of any mothers. Under the pretexts that the English blockade has made the food question extremely difficult and that no response was forthcoming to the appeal for workers on the land, the Germans have taken steps to enforce a civilian deportation, during which every possible refinement of cruelty has been practised. They have not, as they did in the first place, taken whole families. No, to suffer in this way was too lenient a punishment, so they have made a selection from each household, one, two, three, four or five members—men, women, boys of fifteen, young girls, those upon whom the choice of the officer chanced to fall. And, to prolong our agony, they operated district by district, without giving us any previous information which was to be the one selected, and until dawn—or until three in the morning—these *Gentlemen*, headed by regimental bands (accompanied also with mitrailleuses

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and fixed bayonets), went forth in search of women and children, and took them forcibly away. God only knows where to and why! "They" say it is away from the fighting line, and that the work is non-military.

.

During the night of Good Friday, until 3 a.m. on Holy Saturday, the troops searched the houses in the first district designated by the authorities. It was terrible at Fives. There an officer selected a certain number of persons, and gave them time, varying from an hour to ten minutes, in which to get ready.

Antoine D. and her sister, a girl of twenty-two, were carried off, but it was not until their grandmother became suddenly and dangerously ill that the younger girl (who was not fourteen) was allowed to remain at home. But an old man and a couple of infirm people were not allowed to keep the girl who was their sole support. And "They"

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merely sneered and laughed, adding insult to injury.

The doctor's (B.'s uncle) wife was allowed to retain one of her two maids, and she decided to keep the elder.

"Very well," said the officer, "then *we* shall take the one that we know you evidently wish to keep at home."

Mlle. L., who had just recovered from an attack of typhoid and bronchitis, saw a non-commissioned officer about to lead away her maid.

"What a lamentable duty is forced on us!" he said.

"It is worse than lamentable, sir; it is barbarous!"

"Barbarous!—that's a strong expression. Are you not afraid I shall give you away?"

And, as the result, Mlle. L. *was* denounced to the authorities by this traitor. She was given seven minutes in which to get ready, and then she was taken through the streets bareheaded, her feet thrust

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hastily into bedroom slippers, and duly arraigned before the Colonel commanding this glorious battle. She was ordered to be sent away, notwithstanding her doctor's protests, and it was only due to her indomitable courage and her good fortune in meeting a Boche who was less "cultured" than the majority that she was released at five o'clock, after a day of real crucifixion.

"It is thus," said Monsignor Charost, "that the Passion of our families adds to the Passion of our Saviour."

But our soldiers must not avenge us by any deeds which will sully the stainless name of France. Let them be content to wait for God to punish the wrongs we have suffered. These evil men will be cursed in their race, in their families, and in their children. This was said by a woman whose husband, son and daughter had been carried away into slavery.

Nearly all the servants have been deported; in some instances they offered to

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go as substitutes for young ladies, in others they begged to accompany those for whom they had worked. The concentration camps, so they say, are exactly like slave-markets.

Embrace all our dear little ones, and to G. and yourself all my love..

M.

(This letter is not given in its entirety, as certain portions of it do not refer to the abductions at Lille.)

Letter from the Yellow Book

1,200 to 1,500 people have been taken away nightly at the point of the bayonet. Mitraillleuses were placed at the corners of the streets, and military bands played during the abductions, which were principally those of young girls and women of all classes, and men from fifteen to fifty years of age. These people were penned up in cattle-trucks and sent to unknown destinations, presumably to work on the land. The déportés have

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shown typical French courage ; they checked their tears and sang the " Marseillaise " as the trains left the station.

(Annexe No. 14.)

*Protest of Monsignor Charost, Bishop of Lille,
to M. le Général von Gravenitz**

MONSIEUR LE GÉNÉRAL,—It is my duty to tell you that a state of panic is becoming apparent in the population. Numerous abductions of women, young girls, men, boys and even children have taken place in Turcoing and Roubaix without any cause or precedent.

The unfortunate people have been removed to unknown destinations. It is rumoured that similar measures, but on a much larger scale, are contemplated in Lille. You will therefore not be surprised, M. le Général, if I intervene in the name of the Faith of which I am a member. This Faith

* Livre Jaune, Annexe No. 11, p. 22.

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orders me to defend respectfully but firmly that international Right in which War has no part—the right of eternal morality which nothing can ever touch.

My Faith commands me, therefore, to protect the weak and the helpless, who are all my children in Christ, and whose sorrows and sufferings are mine.

You are a father, and therefore you must know that one of the highest codes of humanity is the inviolability of family life. Everything which God has decreed should be found in it. The German officers, who have lived so long in our homes, must be aware by this time that family ties constitute the strongest and sweetest bond in the North of France.

Thus, to break up any home by taking young girls from their parents is *not War*, but Torture, and the worst of all tortures—the possibility of moral danger. Any infringement of family rights is doubly an infringement when it becomes a question of

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morality. This state of things is likely to produce dangers against which any decent-minded man will rebel—the indiscriminate mixing of both sexes, or possibly the promiscuous intercourse between moral and immoral persons. Young girls who have led blameless lives, and who have only committed the offence of fetching bread and potatoes for their families, have been carried off. Their mothers who have watched over them, and whose sole joy consisted in taking care of them during the absence of the fathers or grandsons, who are fighting, or perhaps killed, are now alone. They openly show their despair and their agony. I speak of what *I have seen* and what *I have heard*. I feel you cannot be aware of this state of things. I know that you will uphold Right, and, because I know this, I am addressing you in this manner: I beg you, therefore, to transmit to the German High Command, with all possible speed, this letter from a Bishop who has not exaggerated the un-

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that she was taken to the hospital, *and we never saw her again.*

(Annexe No. 37, p. 48.)

Testimony of a Woman aged 58

The Germans made us work like *brute beasts*. They harnessed us to carts, and made us take away stones, dung, and all duties usually done by soldiers. Our food consisted of six potatoes a day.

(Annexe No. 61, p. 59.)

Conduct of Officers

The Captain of Artillery—Olop by name—who stayed two months at N——, was a brute, a drunkard, and a savage. One day he said to Mme. L. that he was surprised that the people of B—— were not dead with suffering after being subjected to his system, and he was equally surprised to find any people still alive in N——, where he was once stationed.

Another officer told Mme. L. that the

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Germans delighted in violating all the rules of war, one after another.

(Annexe No. 86, p. 67.)

Enforced Work for Women

I wish to state that my sister M., who is younger than myself, was forced by the Germans to work by night and day in the fields, although she was totally unfitted for such work. My sister did her work *between the fighting lines*, and, notwithstanding the unceasing bombardment, she was not allowed to cease work.

(Annexe No. 88, p. 68.)

Women Working under Fire

I was imprisoned for two days for not coming punctually to work in the fields, where we were obliged to spend the whole of every day, even Sundays.

The corporal, whose name I forget, made us keep on working, although shells were bursting around us, but he took cover behind the grindstones.

(Annexe No. 93, p. 70.)

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Young Girls at Work under Fire

Since the month of March, 1915, to September 30th, 1915, all the young girls living at W—— were made to work in the fields three times a week, in spite of the shells which were falling unceasingly. Once the English shells fell on the factory where we were threshing corn. The Germans went down to the cellars, but they made us keep on working. A young girl who was terrified and hid herself was punished by being forced to work the whole of the next day.

(Annexe No. 94, p. 70.)

Pains and Penalties

On the 13th of March a hundred of us were sent to work at H——, in the Somme district, there to dig up beetroots from six in the morning until six at night, and if we lifted our heads or stopped work for a minute the soldiers hit us with the butt ends of their muskets and pelted our faces with the beetroots.

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All we had to eat was a little bread every three days, some coffee, or—to speak more truly—some dirty water, rice soup at mid-day, and more “dirty water” at night.

More often than not we never had any bread; we were told that the food convoy had been stopped by the French, and when any of us escaped we were all deprived of solid food. For two days our sole nourishment consisted of “coffee”!

Ten of us escaped. Eight were retaken the next day. They each received more than two hundred strokes with a horse-whip; they were kept without bread for two days, then taken to work by warders armed with sticks, and whenever one of them looked up he was struck on the head.

I was taken away with my aunt about 7 o'clock in the morning, just as we were breakfasting. We (and four young girls) were conducted to a place near the railway, and put in front of a troop of Uhlans, who

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then opened fire on the French, who returned it. My uncle, Paul V., fell dead — shot through the heart. We threw ourselves on the ground and pretended to be dead; some Zouaves then arrived and captured the Uhlans. We were at once liberated by them and returned home.

(Annexe No. 171, p. 112.)

Touching the Treatment of Women

After the capture of S—— the German authorities forced me and a large number of women to work. We were made to wash the soldiers' linen, and we sewed sacks for use in the trenches.

Three hundred of us were imprisoned in the Town School; we were not allowed any freedom. The reveille sounded at 5 a.m., and we worked until 7 p.m. The work was done in gangs. Those women who refused to work, or who said they could not work unless they were given enough to eat (the

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food was very bad and insufficient), were flogged with the cat-o'-nine-tails, kicked, and had pails of water thrown over them—then they were beaten!

I was imprisoned in the school for eleven weeks. (Annexe No. 230, p. 137.)

Barbarous Cruelty

At M—— the Germans ordered us to make sacks. Upon our refusal we were imprisoned in a warehouse and threatened with death. As we persisted in refusing we were given *one small piece of bread* a day. This went on for four days. In order to prevent us from sleeping, a German soldier went round the warehouse throughout the night and tickled our chins.

(Annexe No. 239, p. 142.)

Requisitioned to Dig Trenches

One day the Germans requisitioned three hundred young people of both sexes for land work, but instead of employing them

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in this manner they sent them to dig trenches. The next day only sixty remained of the three hundred persons who had gone to work. Nothing is known what became of the others. (Annexe No. 226, p. 128.)

French Civilians at Head of Uhlans

The Germans entered S—— on August 25th, 1914, at 9 a.m. A troop of Uhlans acted as an advance guard. *These men drove in front of them men, women, and children who were ordered to guide them through the streets of the town.* Among them were M. and Mme. L. M. L. was killed by a French bullet whilst the French were then opposing the enemy's advance. His dead body was found in the street. Mme. L. was spared.

Many inhabitants of S—— (amongst others the H.'s, relations of a repatriated girl living at T—— O——) can bear witness as to the truth of this outrage.

(Annexe No. 181, p. 116.)

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Prisoners Preceding German Troops

On October 8th, 1914, a number of civilians—men, women, and children—were forced to precede a detachment of German troops.

The troops wished to cross a bridge over a small river not far distant from B——, and as they believed that the French would defend this bridge, they made the prisoners go on before them.

Close to the bridge the French opened fire and the Germans retreated. As for us, we threw ourselves in a ditch on the roadside, and none of us was hit by the French. Some hours later, as the French firing had ceased owing to an order to retreat, the Germans came back to look for us; they drove us out of our shelter and pricked us with the points of their bayonets.

(Annexe No. 173, p. 113.)

Why the French Suspended Fire

A—— G—— (Meuse): The Germans put

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civilians in a line before the German troops in order that the civilians might be killed by the French. But the French did not open fire.

(Annexe No. 161, p. 109.)

Field Work for Young Girls

Young girls were forced to pull up beet-roots in the most inclement weather under the threat of being imprisoned in the church.

(Annexe No. 180, p. 98.)

Commandeered Female Labour

When I left home with my children the German Commandant told us to take two days' supply of provisions with us, as we were going to be deported to the Swiss frontier. On our arrival at L—— (Meurthe et Moselle) they kept us prisoners there for a month, during which period the commune partly supplied us with food. My daughters were compelled by the Germans to work on the land without any payment. They

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had to help clean the streets, and they worked on the estates pillaged by the Germans.

(Annexe No. 95, p. 93.)

Working Between the Lines

During four months—from June until nearly October—I was compelled to work by day and night in fields situated between the French and German lines, in spite of the shells which fell constantly.

There were many of us, and all those in the village who could work were subjected to the same treatment.

(Annexe No. 91, p. 69.)

Working Under Fire

The Germans forced the French, both men *and women*, to work night and day in fields situated between the firing lines, notwithstanding the continual bombardment. I especially remember Mlle. M., who lived at M——, who was often given the most

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dangerous employment. The Germans were excessively severe, so much so that existence became almost impossible.

(Annexe No. 90, p. 69.)

All-day Turns of Unpaid Compulsory Labour

Men, women and children were compelled to work in the fields from sunrise until sunset, under the surveillance of German corporals. No payment was received by these people.

(Annexe No. 67, p. 61.)

Work or Gaol—the Alternatives

The Germans forced me to work in the hospitals, on the land, and also at the harvesting near S——. In the hospitals at S—— I was employed in washing the linen and the bandages. This occupied the entire day. We worked in gangs in the country, but in the hospitals we worked single-handed.

Those who refused to work were at once imprisoned.

(Annexe No. 46, p. 51.)

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Newspaper Comments on the Deportations

The XXe. Siècle.—The natural cruelty of the German race is not the only source from which their barbarous acts spring. If Christianity and the Church, which have hitherto conquered many a worse state of things, are powerless against the German spirit, it is because unbridled ambition and limitless pride constitute its principal element. German ferocity does not solely result from the licence given to its gross instincts; it is the outcome of a species of self-communing in which German superiority is the dominant factor. The German thinks that everything is permitted him because he believes himself to be far above all other peoples, superior to all in strength and rectitude, and destined by Fate to bring happiness to all nations. Ever since the celebrated address delivered by Fichte to the German nation over a hundred years ago, the school, the barrack-room, and the Press have laboured

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unceasingly to instil this belief of superiority into the minds of the populace. For men who are such fanatics nothing is immoral which is considered necessary in German interests, whose triumph is believed to be essential to the happiness of humanity. Murder to them is a pious act ; the deportation of women and children, the sack of towns, the slaughter of defenceless civilians—all these signify mere forms of ritual. This outlook constitutes the sin of the spirit in all its horror, and this aspect explains the ferocity of the orders, the servility of those who carry them out, the complicity of the Socialists, and the guilty silence of the Catholics—in short, the impassiveness of the whole nation.

The Gazette de Lausanne.—In open defiance of the Hague Convention, Germany has deported large numbers of civilians. She has effected this with a refinement of cruelty calculated to madden French opinion against

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her. Members of families have been savagely separated. No consideration has been shown to sex or age. Young girls have been abducted in the most suspicious circumstances, which can only give rise to the worst possible fears. It is no hour for laughter; it is the hour to weep the tears of blood shed by any right-minded man over the heartrending spectacle of such a fall. How, therefore, is it possible to condemn the French and English wish for Vengeance? Can so many excesses, so many heinous crimes remain unpunished without degrading the entire European conscience?

The Brazilian newspaper *Lo Commercio* published this short but entirely effective condemnation :—

The deportations in the North of France conclusively show the utter alienation of Germany from the rest of civilisation.

The well-known Lausanne publication, *La*

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Bibliothèque Universale, issued the following appeal to its readers:—

We protest!

Against the deportations of old people, women and children.

Against the re-establishment of slavery under hypocritical pretexts.

Against the treatment inflicted on the twenty-five thousand inhabitants of Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing.

A petition is about to be circulated. Readers, for the sake of pity, for the dignity of the human race, we implore you to cover this petition with your signatures.

The following is the text of this petition, which, starting from the 24th of September, numbered 55,580 signatures:—

Considerable numbers of non-combatants in French territory, consisting mostly of women and young girls, have been torn from their families and sent to work far from their homes.

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The deportations were effected during Holy Week, and the news of this has just reached us.

This act plainly defies the Hague Convention. And as Switzerland has signed this Convention, she holds herself morally responsible for any variations of the original agreement.

The fact of Germany having slighted this Convention constitutes a direct affront to our dignity.

The newspapers report that the French Government has apprised neutral countries of these facts, begging them to protest against acts of war which clearly transgress the rights of civilians.

We respectfully beg you to follow the proceedings started by the French Government, and raise, in the name of Switzerland, the most emphatic protest.

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The Statement of F., born at S—

At L— we were made to work from 6 a.m. until 4 p.m., and when we were ill we were made to work just the same; if we demurred even a little, we were put in the cells on bread and water.

I saw a friend of mine who had tried to escape, beaten, and her hands were tied behind her back for five days.

The Statement of the C. Family

Turned out of their house, the C. family was homeless for three months. The husband was made to work in the streets, and the elder children had to collect wooden bowls and boxes without being paid for their labour. The Germans took away everything they fancied in our house, and we dared not rebel, as, if we did, the Germans threatened us with their bayonets or their revolvers. They paid insignificant prices for certain articles: a bicycle which had cost

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225 francs was "bought" for 25 francs; and a sewing-machine which originally cost 180 francs was taken without any contrapayment! House-linen and forage were carried off wholesale.

(Annexe No. 82, p. 68.)

The German Way!

Nobody is free to act as they choose. Every day men and women are taken away to work in the fields and keep the roads in repair without any payment. Notwithstanding her protests, the person who makes this statement was obliged to work every day. All the harvests, without exception, also the grain, forage, and vegetables, have been commandeered by the Germans.

The ploughing teams were usually supplied with troop-horses. In occupied houses the military took away exactly what they wanted, without asking permission and without giving payment. They did not offer any credit

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notes for commandeered articles. *They simply stole everything.*

(Annexe No. 132, p. 92.)

Germans First

My father and brother F. were shut up in a granary, where they slept on straw for twenty-five days, and afterwards they were taken to the church (the roof of which had been demolished) until March 25th, 1915. They were forced to work under the supervision of two German soldiers. Fernand was struck on the head several times by a Prussian gendarme.

The Germans commandeered all our provisions, and my family was obliged to buy food at starvation prices. The Germans allowed 125 grammes of black bread daily (for an adult) and 62 grammes for a child. I had only 62 grammes allowed me when I was forced to work for the invaders.

(Annexe No. 142, p. 96.)

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Anent the Food of Prisoners

At G——, where he [the witness] stayed for five months, he was badly fed for the greater part of the time, and herded with others in a building where the only floor-covering was damp straw; for food they were given the offal of slaughtered animals, a few carrots, and a little black bread.

(Annexe No. 160, p. 109.)

Question and Answer

“ Can you enumerate any special instances of good or bad treatment of any French civilians ? ”

“ Yes, the schoolmaster of Stenay, M. T., was forced to scout for the Germans when they entered the town. In consequence of this the poor man was accidentally killed by French bullets.”

(Annexe No. 164, p. 110.)

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Wounded Civilians in the Van

The inhabitants of V—— took refuge at L——. I saw them arrive there, covered with blood, in some instances with their beards torn out. According to them, the Germans put them in front of their troops when they were advancing on L——.

(Annexe No. 166, p. 111.)

About the Removal of Bombs

At the beginning of 1915, some time before our deportation, the English aviators dropped bombs on several munition works. After this the Germans forced the male civilians, even young children from 13 to 14 years of age, to help carry away the wreckage, in case any unexploded bombs might suddenly explode and wound their own soldiers.

Afterwards civilians were requisitioned to repair the German guns and help manufacture shells.

(Annexe No. 194, p. 125.)

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Enforced Civilian Removal of Bombs

One day (I am not sure of the exact date, but it was some time in October) French aviators dropped bombs on the railway station and the powder-mills. A large fire broke out. A number of civilians were immediately called out to remove the débris at the railway and the powder-mill, notwithstanding the great risks to which they were exposed. *The German soldiers were not employed.*

The work was carried out by gangs. Those who refused to work were taken to the Town Hall and then sent as prisoners to Germany.

I do not know how much was paid those who worked. I believe they were given 1 franc 25 centimes in money or in credit notes. They fed and slept at their own homes.

The Germans issued notices asking for men and youths as voluntary workers ; but

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as no response was forthcoming, the soldiers went from house to house and took away those persons they required.

Nearly all these civilians were employed in digging trenches.

(Annexe No. 204, p. 129.)

Huns Hiding Behind Lads

At the time of the German advance I took refuge at H—— (Pas de Calais) with my aunt. On October 20th, 1914, the Germans captured H—— and the surrounding country as far as L——. My aunt and myself hid in the cellar until 7 a.m., when seven Germans who were looting the house discovered us. They compelled us to follow them; one of them spoke French. An automobile was waiting outside the door; I was told to get in, and put between two Germans with fixed bayonets. My aunt was left behind.

I was taken to L——, where I found other

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young men and boys who came from H—— and its environs. I think we numbered fifty. We were set to dig trenches, and we stayed there for six days. We slept on the bare ground, and were not even given a single covering to protect us from the cold. Fortunately, it did not rain. We were badly fed, and when the work was not done quickly enough the Germans beat us with their horse-whips.

At the end of six days some automobiles were sent to fetch us away. We were put in by threes, but I happened to be alone. We were then taken to L——. This was about the 25th or 26th of October. We heard firing, as the French were then attacking one of the largest bridges at L——. *The Germans used us as their shields. The officers whipped us on before them, and the soldiers pushed us with the butt ends of their muskets. All the Germans hid behind us. They insulted us the whole time.* As the French were firing unceasingly, and as the

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75's were in action, *many of us fell*. We remained in this unenviable position for the whole afternoon, the Germans still behind us, *firing over our shoulders*. We were terrified, and some of the younger boys wept. But we said we would rather be killed by the French than live to see the Germans victorious. I was wounded towards the end of the afternoon by a splinter of a shell from a 75, which made me lose consciousness. Out of our original fifty, *thirty* of us were now killed or wounded. Before our arrival the Germans had employed other young men to act as "shields" in a similar manner. *There were many corpses of civilians strewing the ground*.

When I recovered my senses I was lying on a stretcher, surrounded by French soldiers and a doctor, as the French had captured the bridge and found me left there for dead. The doctor said I had had a narrow escape, and that my arm must have some stitches put in, as I had lost a deal of blood.

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I was then taken to the ambulance station at B——, where I remained for some days.

I can swear that out of fifty of my fellow-civilians forty were killed, either on that day or the next; three were wounded, and only seven came through scatheless. I know one of two wounded very well; his name is S., he is 17 years of age, and comes from H—— L—— (Pas de Calais). He was taken by the Germans to B—— M—— to work in the mines. He was hit in the hand by a splinter from a shell. He now lives at G——, and is employed as a mason's workman. As for the third boy who was wounded, I am at a loss to remember his name. He first went to G—— with our convoy, but later was deported elsewhere. He was wounded in the wrist by a splinter from a shell.

(Annexe No. 210, p. 131.)

Forcibly Requisitioned

The Germans forcibly requisitioned 3,000 young men. Some of them were sent to

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Germany, and the remainder were retained to work in the invaded territory. The Germans let none escape; the men were taken by rail to Q—— or to P—— and set to work on the land. They were badly fed and slept on rotten straw. When they did not please the Germans they were beaten with thongs. These youths were not paid direct; their parents received 20 francs a month for “services rendered”!

(Annexe No. 225, p. 137.)

Civilian Prisoners

Paragraph VI. of the Annexes is devoted to the condition of civilian prisoners who were brought back from Germany to work in the occupied territory far from their original homes.

No Reasons Given

Extract from a note sent by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs (October 27th, 1915), communicated to the French Ministry

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of Foreign Affairs by the Spanish Ambassador, which affected to deal with the question of the transfer of civilian prisoners brought from Germany to Montmédy :—

“ The military authorities do not consider themselves called upon to give any of the reasons which have actuated this transfer, etc.”

In publishing this extract, the Yellow Book (*Livre Jaune*) makes this observation :—

It is necessary to insert here the official document of the German Government, as it establishes the fact that civilian prisoners have been brought back to the invaded territory without its being possible to ascertain where they are living and what is their fate, the German authorities, for reasons of their own, refusing to afford us any information.

This treatment of French subjects is unheard of ; it recognises no authority or rules of war. These unfortunate people are now

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probably lost entirely to their relations. It is even impossible to find out at what kind of work they are employed.

Kultur for Civilians

On their arrival the Germans arrested the máyor, the municipal authorities, and various well-known people in the neighbourhood, who were afterwards shut 'up in a house in the village and remained there practically in prison for five months, only going out to work on the roads under the surveillance of German soldiers. A farmer, M. D., who refused to work, was stripped and sent naked and blindfold into the fields where shrapnel was falling. His hands were tied behind him, but he was able to find his way home owing to his knowledge of the district. Notwithstanding the protests of his family, the unhappy man was exposed to shellfire for the entire day. He was taken as hostage to Germany, and he is now in a very critical state of health owing to the

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treatment to which he has been subjected. All the country people witnessed this crime. His wife, Madame D., was robbed of her personal property and her house completely stripped.

(Annexe No. 40, p. 49.)

Mayor and Town Councillors Hung Up for a Time

They [the Germans] forced me to undertake the unpleasant duties of sweeping the streets and digging potatoes for them. One day those on fatigue duty were late in arriving, and the Germans strung up the mayor to a tree by means of ropes passed under his arms. He was left in this plight for over an hour in the square facing the church. Two of the town councillors were tied to posts and placed on either side of the mayor.

(Annexe No. 46, p. 51.)

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