

BELGIUM UNDER THE GERMAN OCCUPATION. (1916)

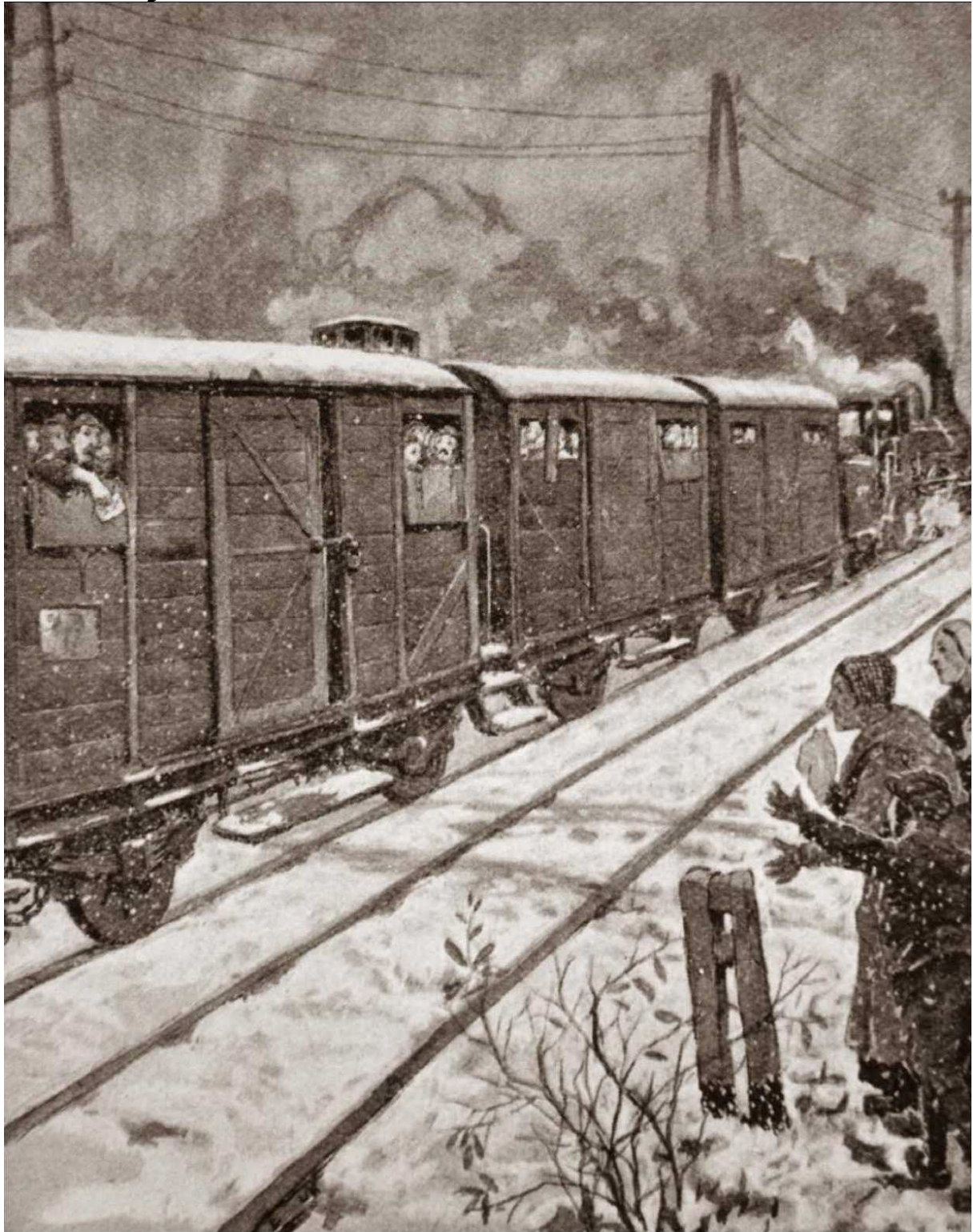
A PERSONAL NARRATIVE 2

Brand WHITLOCK

Chapter **XXXIII**. The press-gangs : **Ghent**.

Thursday, October 12, and Friday, the 13th, were sinister dates in the territory of East Flanders, for the seizures were begun everywhere in those days. Two thousand, some said twenty-five hundred, men were locked up in the storehouse of the "*La Linière Gantoise*", a large flax-spinning factory at Ghent. The men having refused to work for the Germans or to sign the proffered contract, were held there by German troops, and the selection was made after a most cursory examination. They were not all of them unemployed workmen ; some of them were clerks or small tradesmen. They were kept imprisoned, huddled together in an insufficient space, with no sanitary arrangements, no place to sleep except the bare and crowded floor, with little or nothing to eat ; once a day they were taken out of doors for exercise under a heavy military guard. All the while, by means of threats and every manner of intimidation, the Germans tried to extort from them, if not their signatures to the contract, their oral consent to work. Finally they were shipped off to

Germany, and they, too, went singing "*La Brabançonne*" and "*De Leeuw van Vlaanderen*."



The shops of Van den Kerkhove were "*requisitioned*", the directors having declined to permit their plant to work for the Germans. Then

the Germans installed German foremen, but the men refused to work under them, or to work for the Germans at all. Then, as a German improvement on the old system of the lock-out, they were locked up and given no food, in order to force them to work for their conquerors. They were closely guarded, but out of the factory windows they used to drop notes which their friends picked up and so learned of their sufferings.

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Footnotes.

Belgium under the German Occupation : A Personal Narrative ; London ; William HEINEMANN ; 1919, 2 volumes. See chapter (« The Press-gangs», sometimes with title « *Documents in evidence* » in other editions), volume 2, pages 268-344 (76 pages). About Ghent : page 277. (**Very partial**) French translation does NOT existe in «*Les enlèvements*» in WHITLOCK, Brand ; chapitre XXVI (1916) in ***La Belgique sous l'occupation allemande : mémoires du ministre d'Amérique à Bruxelles*** ; (Paris ; Berger-Levrault ; 1922) pages 383-391.

It would be interesting compare with what **Paul MAX** (cousin of the *bourgmestre Adolphe MAX*) told about the same day in his ***Journal de guerre*** (*Notes d'un Bruxellois pendant l'Occupation 1914-1918*) :

http://www.museedelavilledebruxelles.be/fileadmin/user_upload/publications/Fichier_PDF/Fonte/Journal_de%20guerre_de_Paul_Max_bdef.pdf

It would also be interesting compare with what [Louis GILLE](#), [Alphonse OOMS](#) et [Paul DELANDSHEERE](#) told about the same days in ***50 mois d'occupation allemande*** (Volume 2 : 1916) :

<http://www.idesetautres.be/?p=ides&mod=iea&smod=ieaFictions&part=belgique100>

It would also be interesting compare with what Charles TYTGAT told about the same days in ***Journal d'un journaliste. Bruxelles sous la botte allemande*** :

<http://www.idesetautres.be/?p=ides&mod=iea&smod=ieaFictions&part=belgique100>