APPEAL BY BELGIAN WORKMEN

Drawings by Wallace Morgan

(Of the Vigilantes)

"Workers—In the name of the international bonds that unite all workmen, the working classes of Belgium—threatened, without exception, with slavery, deportation and forced labor for the enemy's gain—send to the working classes in other lands a supreme appeal.

"Germany, as you know, attacked and terrorized Belgium in 1914 for having defended her right to neutrality and her faith and honor.

"Germany has been martyrizing Belgium. She has from that moment onward turned the land into a prison: the frontiers are armed against Belgians like a battle front. . . . All our constitutional liberties have been abolished. There is no longer safety anywhere; the life of our citizens is at the mercy of the policeman—arbitrary, limitless, pitiless. . . . Belgian industrial idleness has been the creation of the Germans, maintained by them for their own profit.* To these 500,000 unemployed they have for the last month been saying: 'Either you will sign a contract to work for Germany, or you will be reduced to slavery.' In either case, it means exile, deportation, forced labor in the interests of the enemy and against the interests of our country: formidable punishments, the cruellest ever invented by tyranny for the punishment of crimes—and what are the crimes alleged? . . . On the Western front, Belgian workmen—your brothers and ours—are being forced to dig trenches, to build aviation camps, to fortify the German lines, and when the victims, in spite of everything, are firm in their refusal to take part in work forbidden by international law, they are starved and beaten into illness, wounded, and sometimes even killed.

"In Germany they are turned on to work in the mines and at lime-kilns, quite regardless of their age, profession or trade. Youths of seventeen, old men of seventy, are deported in haphazard masses. Is not this a revival of ancient slavery, with all its horrors? . . . Do you know, brothers, what the Germans throw to their victims by way of pay? Thirty pfennigs (6 cents) a day!

"Workers: Never forget that the soldiers who are acting as the torturers of our Belgian workmen are themselves German workers!

"In the depths of our distress, we count on you. It is for you to act! For ourselves, even if brute force succeeds for the moment in reducing our bodies to servitude, we shall never give our consent.

"A final word: Whatever tortures we may undergo, we do not wish for Peace except with the independence of our country and the triumph of justice.

"THE WORKMEN OF BELGIUM."

*By levying on Belgium a war contribution which already exceeds £40,000,000—by transporting to Germany food, merchandise and various products to the value of more than £200,000,000—by seizing and dispatching to their own country the greater portion of our raw material, machines and accessories—by issuing threatening edicts to prevent localities from using the unemployed on their own important works of public utility.