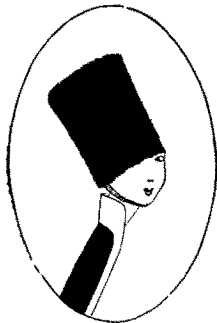


Vanity Fair: January, 1915

# LONDON TAKEN BY THE BELGIANS!

Some Flashes of the Foreign Invasion—Old Clothes and War—  
An Echo from Deserted Bond Street

By Campbell Lee with Drawings by Fish



One must stand by the Life guards, otherwise where is one's excuse for sporting a new hat

**H**AVE you a little Belgian in your home?

London has thousands of them. . .

The invasion of the gay old town on the Thames by the people of beggared Belgium has furnished one of the most moving and picturesque episodes in English history. For weeks there has been a steady stream of refugees from Charing Cross to the great barracks-like Relief Head-

quarters in Aldwych. Bewildered peasants, speaking outlandish Walloon and other strange Flemish dialects, with children clutching their skirts, and bundles, volatile hordes from the provincial towns, thee-and-thou-ing right and left and missing nothing of interest; gentle bourgeois from Brussels and the famously pretty girls from Ghent.

New consignments from the stricken country are constantly descending from the motor busses given over to them and which form a queue from the Strand Theatre to St. Clement Danes almost as long as the line at "Tommy Atkins." More French than English is heard in the streets . . . indeed the silent English are quite lost in the chatter. There are French posters in front of the theatres, a half-dozen French newspapers are cried, in French, on every corner. The *Times* carries as many notices and advertisements in French as the *Figaro*, and Mr. Asquith has taken pains to have his famous Guild Hall speech translated and displayed outside the Lord Mayor's residence and elsewhere so that the French eye may read. The restaurants resound with cries of "Garçon!" as no respectable English person ever pronounces the joyous word. Even Simpson's Grill has become garçonized.

**T**HE problem of providing homes for the destitute refugees, the people who have lost everything, has been, next to

the War Work, the great preoccupation of the autumn. The English people are acting as host to these homeless ones with a generosity that is beyond all praise. In hundreds of instances they have met the crucial test of sympathy by welcoming these strangers, speaking an alien tongue, unto the sanctity of their breakfast tables. The general feeling seems to be that any person who has an unused



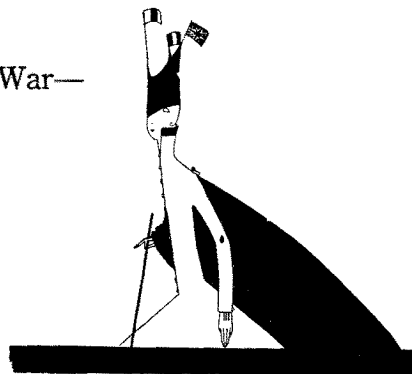
Lady Muriel Polly Glot, interpreter at refugee headquarters, finds that her French phrase book has not given her much to work with

corner in his home should tuck an ill-used Belgian into it.

Where is that other most celebrated refugee, Paris Fashion? Not in London. Fashion is under a ban. Women are too busy running the war to think of clothes. Moreover, who



Another painful atrocity: an Englishman, with Belgians quartered in his home, forced to talk during breakfast



This lady thought to palliate her smart costume by a patriotic motif, but she is too self-conscious to carry it off without attracting official attention

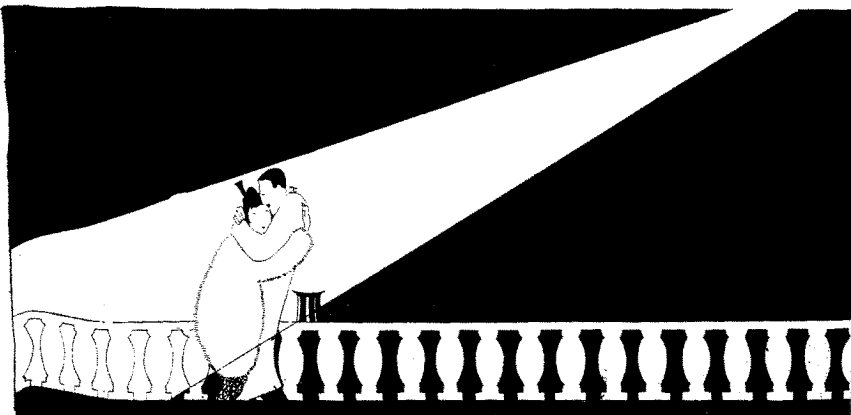
would spend a shilling on a hat while blankets and bandages were needed at the front? Or think of frocks, or any frivolity, while regiments are being wiped out, and brave lives lost? It is not overstating it to say that any woman who cannot control her longing for new clothes during the present crisis, nay, who cannot joyfully wear her last season's kit, is due to receive the biggest, blackest frown from Society, and Queen Mary, that anybody ever had. So far there have been a few culprits, but only a few. Every now and then there is a rumour that a certain well-known lady was actually seen coming out of a smart West End dress-maker's establishment . . . or that another equally well-known Society hostess had been tracked to a Bond Street hat shop. But in neither case was it official, and it is quite probable that both ladies were, on these suspicious occasions, simply collecting funds.

**G**ETTING home from the theatres is something of a trick these dark days, or nights. The Strand is as black as in the days when link-boys went ahead to light the way for the home-wending Bucks and Corinthians. Link-boys would be useful now . . . electric link-boys, of course. But they would certainly attract the Zeppelins! A baby firefly that showed itself in London at present would be taken in hand by the police; the very cats are ordered off the roofs.

But the town has a strange fascination in its eighteenth century gloom. All night long the searchlights at Hyde Park Corner and on Lambeth Bridge, looking like monstrous comets

with powder puffs at the end, play fantastic tricks with clouds and stars and distance; with the Duke of York's monument, Nelson's silhouette, and the towers of Westminster Abbey. They do not reveal the sand bags on the Abbey roof, but one understands that the sand bags are there . . . mocking the coming Zeppelins, which haven't seemed to come.

**L**ONDON is well worth living in in these troubled days if only for its contrasts . . . The gloom of the streets, the sinister play of the searchlights, the abnormal hour at which the theatres open and the public houses close, the fact that half the male population is in khaki and the other half would like to be, that Society is wearing Noah's Ark clothes and that to buy a new hat is a crime, that there are no dances, no dinners, no suppers, no premières, no shooting, no posing, no frivolity nor idling, it's rather quickening, you know. But the searchlights have absolutely killed all practical romance.



Platonism has received an unexpected boom in London since the war broke out. There is now no kissing after six o'clock. It isn't against the law, but the searchlights allow no privacy