

August 6th. ---This morning when I came into the Legation I found the Minister of Justice in top hat and frock coat waiting to see somebody. He had received a report that a wireless station had been established on top of the German Legation and was being run by the people who were left in the building. He came to ask the Minister's consent to send a judge to look, see and draw up *aprocès verbal*. In our own artless little American way we suggested that it might be simpler to go straight over and find out how much there was to the report. The Minister of Justice had a couple of telegraph linemen with him, and as soon as Mr. Whitlock could get his hat, we walked around the corner to the German Legation, rang the bell, told the startled occupants that we wanted to go up to the garret and---up we went.

When we got there we found that the only way onto the roof was by a long perpendicular ladder leading to a trap door. We all scrambled up this---all but the Minister of Justice, who remained behind in the garret with his top hat.

We looked the place over very carefully, and the workmen---evidently in order to feel that they were doing something---cut a few wires which probably resulted in great inconvenience to perfectly harmless people farther along the street. But there was no evidence of a wireless outfit. One of the men started to explain to me how that proved nothing at all; that an apparatus was now made that could be concealed in a hat and brought out at night to be worked. He stopped in the middle of a word, for suddenly we heard the rasping intermittent hiss of a wireless very near at hand. Everybody stiffened up like a lot of pointers, and in a minute had located the plant. It was nothing but a rusty girouette on top of a chimney being turned by the wind and scratching spitefully at every turn. The discovery eased the strain and everybody laughed.

Then there was another sound, and we all turned around to see a trap door raised and the serene, bemonocled face of my friend Cavalcanti looked out on us in bewilderment. In our search we had strayed over onto the roof of the Brazilian Legation. It seemed to cause him some surprise to see us doing second-story work on their house. It was a funny situation---but ended in another laugh. It is a good thing we can work in a laugh now and then.

The day was chiefly occupied with perfecting arrangements for getting off our German refugees. The Minister wished the job on me, and I with some elements of executive ability myself gave the worst part of it to Nasmith, the Vice-Consul-General. Modifications became necessary every few minutes, and Leval and I were running around like stricken deer all day, seeing the disheartening number of government officials who were concerned, having changes made and asking for additional trains. During the afternoon more and more Germans came pouring into the Consulate for refuge, until there were over two thousand of them there, terribly crowded and unhappy. Several convents were also packed, and we calculated that we should have two or three thousand to get out of the country. In the morning the Legation was besieged by numbers of poor people who did not know which way to turn and came to us because they had been told that we would take care of them. We were all kept busy; and Leval, smothering his natural feelings, came out of his own accord and talked and advised and calmed the frightened people in their own language. None of us would have asked him to do it, but he was fine enough to want to help and to do it without any fuss.

A crowd of curious people gathered outside the Legation to watch the callers, and now and then they boo-ed a German. I looked out of the window in time to see somebody in the crowd strike at a poor little worm of a man who had just gone out the door. He was excited and foolish enough to reach toward his hip pocket as

though for a revolver. In an instant the crowd fell on him; and although Gustave, the messenger, and I rushed out we were just in time to pull him inside and slam the door before they had a chance to polish him off. Gustave nearly had his clothes torn off in the scrimmage, but stuck to his job. An inspired idiot of an American tourist who was inside tried to get the door open and address the crowd in good American, and I had to handle him most undiplomatically to keep him from getting us all into trouble. The crowd thumped on the door a little in imitation of a mob scene, and the Garde Civique had to be summoned on the run from the German Legation to drive them back and establish some semblance of order. Then de Leval and I went out and talked to the crowd---that is to say, we went out and he talked to the crowd. He told them very reasonably that they were doing harm to Belgium, as actions of this sort might bring reprisals which would cost the country dear, and that they must control their feelings. He sounded the right note so successfully that the crowd broke up with a cheer.

Orders have been issued to permit us free use of the telephone and telegraph, although they have been cut for everybody else. Yesterday afternoon I talked with the Consulates at Ghent and Antwerp. They were both having their troubles with Germans who wanted to get out of the country. I told them to send everybody up here and let them report at their own consulate, where they will be looked after.

The Government is taking no chances of having trouble because of the doings of francs-tireurs. The Minister of the Interior sent out, on the 4th, a circular to every one of the 2,700 communes in the country to be posted everywhere. The circular points out in simple and emphatic terms the duty of civilians to refrain from hostile acts and makes it clear that civilians might be executed for such acts. Aside from this, every newspaper in the country has printed the following notice signed by the Minister of the Interior :

TO CIVILIANS

The Minister of the Interior advises civilians, in case the enemy should show himself in their district:

Not to fight;

To utter no insulting or threatening words;

To remain within their houses and close the windows, so that it will be impossible to allege that there has been any provocation;

To evacuate any houses or small village which may be occupied by soldiers in order to defend themselves, so that it cannot be alleged that civilians have fired;

An act of violence committed by a single civilian would be a crime for which the law provides arrest and punishment. It is all the more reprehensible in that it might serve as a pretext for measures of repression resulting in bloodshed and pillage or

the massacre of the innocent population
with women and children.

In the course of the afternoon we got our telegrams telling of the appropriation by Congress of two and a half millions for the relief of Americans in Europe, and the despatch of the *Tennessee* with the money on board. Now all hands want some of the money and a cabin on the *Tennessee* to go home in.

-----, the Wheat King, came into the Legation this morning and was very grateful because we contrived to cash out of our own pockets a twenty-dollar express check for him. He was flat broke with his pocket bulging with checks and was living in a *pension* at six francs a day. There is going to be a lot of discomfort and suffering unless some money is made available pretty soon. The worst of it is that this is the height of the tourist season and Europe is full of school-teachers and other people who came over for short trips with meager resources carefully calculated to get them through their traveling and home again. by a certain date. If they are kept long they are going to be in a bad way. One of our American colony here, Heineman, had a goodly store of currency and had placed it at the disposal of the Legation, to be used in cashing at face value travelers' checks and other similar paper which bankers will not touch now with a pair of tongs. Shaler has taken charge of that end of the business and has all the customers he can handle. Reineman will have to bide his time to get any money back on all his collection of paper, and his contribution has meant a lot to people who will never know who helped them.

There was a meeting of the diplomatic corps last night to discuss the question of moving with the Court to Antwerp in certain eventualities. It is not expected that the Government will move unless and until the Germans get through Liège and close enough to threaten Louvain, which is only a few miles out of Brussels. There

was no unanimous decision on the subject, but if the Court goes, the Minister and I will probably take turns going up, so as to keep in communication with the Government. There is not much we can accomplish there, and we have so much to do here that it will be hard for either of us to get away. It appeals to some of the colleagues to take refuge with a Court in distress, but I can see little attraction in the idea of settling down inside the line of forts and waiting for them to be pounded with heavy artillery.



Her Majesty, Elisabeth,
Queen of the Belgians



Mr. Brand Whitlock,
American Minister to
Belgium

Liège seems to be holding out still. The Belgians have astonished everybody, themselves included. It was generally believed even here that the most they could do was to make a futile resistance and get slaughtered in a foolhardy attempt to defend their territory against invasion. They have, however, held off a powerful German attack for three or four days. It is altogether marvelous. All papers have the headlines: "*Les forts tiennent toujours.*"

In the course of the afternoon we arranged definitely that at three o'clock this morning there should be ample train accommodations ready at the Gare du Nord to get our Germans out of the country. Nasmith and I are to go down and observe the entire proceedings, so that we can give an authoritative report afterward.

There is a German-American girl married to a German who lives across the street from me. I sent her word to-day that she and her husband and little boy had better get away while there was a way open. Last evening while we were at dinner at the Legation the three of them arrived in a panic. They had heard that there was a mob of ten thousand people about the German Consulate about to break in and kill every German in the place. Of course they could not be persuaded to go near the Consulate or any of the other refuges. They wanted to settle down and stay at the Legation. As the Minister was on his way out to the meeting of the corps, the woman waylaid him, had got down on her knees and kissed his hand and groveled and had hysterics. He called for me and we got them quieted down. I finally agreed to go down to the Consulate and take a look so as to reassure them.

When I got there I found that the streets had been barred off by the military for two blocks in every direction, and that there was only a small crowd gathered to see what might happen. About as hostile as a lot of children. I got through the line of troops and in front of the Consulate found several hundreds of the refugees who had been brought out to be marched to the Cirque Royale, where they could be more comfortably lodged until it was time to start for the train. They were surrounded by placid Gardes Civiques and were all frightened to death. They had had nothing to do for days but talk over the terrible fate that awaited them if the bloodthirsty population of Brussels ever got at them; the stories had grown so that the crowd had hypnotised itself and was ready to credit any yarn. The authorities showed the greatest consideration they could under their orders. They got the crowd started and soon had them stowed away inside the Cirque Royale, an indoor circus near the Consulate. Once they got inside, a lot of them gave way to their feelings and began to weep and wail in a way that bade fair to set off the entire crowd. One of the officers came out to where I was and begged me to come in and try my hand at quieting them. I climbed up on a trunk and delivered an eloquent address to the

effect that nobody had any designs on them; that the whole interest of the Belgian Government lay in getting them safely across the frontier; called their attention to the way the Garde Civique was working to make them comfortable, and to reassure them, promised that I would go with them to the station, put them on their trains, and see them safely off for the frontier. That particular crowd cheered up somewhat, but I could not get near enough to be heard by the entire outfit at one time, so one of the officers dragged me around from one part of the building to another until I had harangued the entire crowd on the instalment plan. They all knew that we were with their interests, and there was nearly a riot when I wanted to leave. They expected me to stay right there until they were taken away.

I came back to the Legation and told my people that the way was clear and that they had nothing to worry about. Mrs. Whitlock and Miss Lamer had taken the family in hand, were petting the baby boy, and had them all cheered up to a sensible state of mind. I got them into the motor and whisked them down to the lines that were drawn about the block. Here we were stopped and, sooner than undertake a joint debate with the sentry, I was for descending and going the rest of the way on foot. When a few of the idly curious gathered about the car, the woman nearly had a fit and scrambled back into the car almost in spasms. Of course the scene drew some more people and we soon had a considerable crowd. I gathered up the boy---who was a beauty and not at all afraid---and took him out of the car. There was in the front rank an enormous Belgian with a fiercely bristling beard. He looked like a sane sort, so I said to him: "*Expliquez à ces gens que vous n'êtes pas des ogres pour croquer les enfants.*" He growled out affably: "*Mais non, on ne mange pas les enfants, ni leurs mères,*" and gathered up the baby and passed him about for the others to look at. My passengers then decided that they were not in such mortal danger and consented to get out. An officer I knew came along and offered to escort them inside. On the way in I ran into Madame Carton de Wiart, wife of the Minister

of Justice, who was there to do what she could to make things run smoothly. She is rabid about the Germans, but is not for taking it out on these helpless people. And that seems to be the spirit of everybody, although it would be quite understandable if they showed these people some of their resentment. The Gardes were bestirring themselves to look after their charges. Some of them had contributed their pocket money and had bought chocolate and milk for the children and mineral waters and other odds and ends for those that needed them. And some of them are not very sure as to how long they will have pocket money for themselves. Aside from the fright and the heat and the noise of that crowd in the Cirque, it was all pretty depressing. During the night one old man died---probably from fright and shock---and a child was born. It was altogether a night of horror that could perfectly well have been avoided if people had only been able to keep calm and stay at home until time for the train to leave.

Having settled my charges and taken a look round, I went back to the Legation and got off some telegrams and talked with Bell over the telephone. He had a lot of news that we had not received and many errands to be done for people who had friends and relatives here.

A little after midnight friend Nasmith came along and we set out together for our rounds. We first took a look at one or two places and then went to my diggings for a sandwich and such rest as we could get before time to start on our round-up. Soon after midnight, Forteseue came rolling up in a cab looking a place to lay his head. He had just come in from where he had had a close view of yesterday morning's heavy fighting. He said the Germans were pouring men in between the forts in solid formation, and that these sheep were being mown down by the Belgians heavily intrenched between the forts. The Germans are apparently determined to get some of their men through between the forts and are willing to pay the price, whatever it

may be. To-day we hear that the Germans have asked for an armistice of twenty-four hours to bury their dead.

After we had hung upon his words as long as he could keep going, Nasmith and I got under way to look after our exodus. The Garde was keeping order at all places where there were refugees, and I was easy in my mind about that; my only worry was as to what might happen when we got our people out into the streets. Promptly at three o'clock we began to march them out of the Cirque. The hour was carefully chosen as the one when there were the least possible people in the streets; the evening crowds would have gone home, and the early market crowd would hardly have arrived. A heavy guard was thrown around the people as they came out of the building and they were marched quickly and quietly down back streets to the Gare du Nord. I never saw such a body of people handled so quickly and yet without confusion. In the station four trains were drawn up side by side; as the stream of people began pouring into the station, it was directed to the first platform and the train was filled in a few minutes. At just the right moment the stream was deflected to the next platform, and so on until all four trains were filled. After starting the crowd into the station and seeing that there was going to be no trouble, I set off with an officer of the Garde Civique to see about other parties coming from some of the convents. They had not waited for us, but were already moving, so that when we got back to the station they tacked onto the end of the first party and kept the stream flowing.

As fast as the trains were filled, the signal was given and they pulled out silently. I stood behind some of the Garde Civique and watched the crowd pour in. The Gardes did not know who I was aside from the fact that my presence seemed to be countenanced by their officers, and so I overheard what they had to say. They were

a decent lot and kept saying: *Mais c'est malheureux tout de même! Regardez donc* and a lot more *pauvres gens. Ce n'est pas de leur faute*, and that sort of thing.

It takes a pretty fine spirit to be able to treat the enemy that way. A lot of people in the passing crowd spotted me and stopped to say good-bye or called out as they went by. It was pathetic to see how grateful they were for the least kind word. I never saw such a pitiful crowd in my life and hope I never may again. They hurried along, looking furtively to right and left with the look of a rat that is in fear of his life. I have seldom pitied people more, for that sort of fear must be the most frightful there is---simple fear of physical violence.

It was remarkable to see the different classes of people who were there. The Manager of a bank of Brussels had abandoned everything he owned and joined the crowd. There were several financiers of standing who felt obliged to flee with their families. There were lots of servants who had lived here for years and were really Belgian in everything but birth. Just before the last train left some closed wagons came from the prisons to bring a lot of Germans and wish them back on their own country in this way.

And there was not an incident. Here and there a prowling cab driver hooted, but there was not a stone thrown or any other violence. Before the last of the procession got into the station, it was nearly six o'clock and broad daylight. We moved up the platform with Major Dandoy and watched the last train leave. The Abbé Upmans was there through it all, working like a trump, bucking the people up; he did not stop until the last train pulled out into the fresh summer morning, and then he stayed aboard after the train was in motion to shake hands with a little handful of downhearted people. He shook himself and heaved a sigh of relief---remarking quietly that his duty had required him to go through all this and look after his

charges while they were in trouble---but that now he might have the satisfaction of being a Belgian. I too heaved a sigh of relief, but it was because the mob was safely off and I need not worry about street fighting.

Dandoy had not had any sleep for nearly sixty hours, and though Nasmith and I were pretty tired ourselves, we thought the least we could do was to take him home. His family is in Liège and he has not been able to get any word from them. I offered to try a telephone message to the Consul at Liège, but have had no luck with it. None the less, Dandoy has been most grateful.

Before we left the station they began bringing in the wounded and prisoners. Most of the wounded I saw were not badly hurt, and were plucky and confident. Most of them were supported or led by Boy Scouts who have taken off the military the full messenger work and a lot of other jobs. They are being of real value, as they can do lots of useful thing and thereby release grown men for service at the front.

When I got back to the Rue St. Boniface---after stopping at the Legation to see what had come in I had just time to throw myself down for a twenty-minute rest before the slave came in with my coffee. And then with no time for a tub, I had to hurry back and get into the harness. And none too soon, for the work began to pour in and I have been kept up all day. If all goes well I hope to get to bed some time after midnight to-night. That means a three hours sleep and hard going during the past forty-eight hours.

This morning the various American committees came to the Legation to report on the measures they have taken for the protection of the colony in case of danger. I have been handed the pleasant task of Chief of Staff, with full authority to settle all matters affecting the protection of Americans in case hostilities reach this part of the country, as seems may well be the case before many days. In harmony with my

well-known policy of passing the buck---more politely known as executive ability--
-I impressed Major Boyer of Army, who is here for the time. He has set up office at the headquarters of the committee and it his business to keep me fully posted as to what going on there. First I started him out to look at the various houses that have been under discussion by the committee, so that he could decide as to their relative accessibility and general strategic advantages. He did this and made all sorts of arrangements tending to co-ordinate the work of the various sub-committees along the lines of the plan we drew up. It will be a great thing to have somebody who will act as buffer for all the detail and relieve me of just that much.

Germans who for one reason or another had not got away on our train kept turning up all day, and we kept sending them along to the Consulate. Late this afternoon the hard-working Nasmith came in to say that there were already seven hundred of them gathered there. We shall have to have another special train for day after tomorrow morning, and hope to get most of the remaining Germans out of harm's way by that time.

The Belgians continue to be a surprise. At last accounts they were still holding the forts at Liège. The French appear to have established themselves along the Meuse and to be ready for the attack when it comes. Where the British troops are, nobody here seems to know---and, strange to say, they are not advertising their whereabouts. There are plenty of people who have had confidential tips from their cook's brother, who lives in the country and has seen them with his own eyes. According to such stories they are all landed at Ostend and are being hurried across the country through Malines. Another story is that they have been shipped through to Liège in closed freight cars to outwit German spies, and that they are now in the thick of it. According to still another of these confidential fellows, they have been shipped through Brussels itself in the night and we were unaware when they passed

under our very windows. You can choose any story you like and get an audience with it these days.

To-day's mouth-to-mouth news is that the French have fought a big battle near St. Hubert and repulsed the Germans with heavy losses. This has about as much confirmation as the reports as to the whereabouts of the British army.

To-day trains have been coming in all day with wounded from Liège, and the lot--- Belgian and German---are being cared for by the Red Cross. The Palace has been turned into a hospital, and the Queen has taken over the supervision of it. Nearly every big hotel in town has turned its dining-room into a ward, and guests are required to have their meals in their rooms. Some of the big department stores have come up finely in outfitting hospitals and workrooms, clearing out their stocks, and letting profits go hang for the time being. The International Harvester Company cleared its offices here and installed twenty-five beds-informing the Red Cross that it would take care of the running expenses as long as the war lasts. The hospital facilities have grown far faster than the wounded have come in, and there is an element of humour in the rush of eager women who go to the station and almost fight for the wounded as they are brought off the trains.

I impressed the services of several people to help put to-day but the most valuable are two crack stenographers who have been turned over to us by business firms here. By dint of labouring with them all morning and afternoon and seeing as few people as possible, I have managed to clean up my desk, so that I can go to bed with a clear conscience to-night when I have got through my call to London.

In GIBSON, Hugh (Secretary of the American Legation in Brussels, 1914) ; *A journal from our Legation in*

Belgium ; New York ; Doubleday, Page & Company
Garden City; 1917 :

[http://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/memoir/Legation/Gibs
onTC.htm](http://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/memoir/Legation/Gibs
onTC.htm)

Footnotes.

It would be interesting compare with what **Roberto J. Payró** told about the same day in his *Diario de un testigo* (*La guerra vista desde Bruselas*) :

Original Spanish version :

<http://idesetautres.be/upload/19140806%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20INCOMUNICADO.pdf>

French version :

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140806%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20INCOMUNICADO%20FR.pdf>

It would be also 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%20Oguerre_de_Paul_Max_bdef.pdf)