

**Brussels, August 12, 1914.** --- A few minutes' gap, so I seize my pen to scratch off a line.

Last night when I left here I rode up the Rue Bélliard on my way home. I was stopped in front of the German Legation by the guard which was placed across the street. They examined the chauffeur's papers carefully and then looked over mine. They compared the tintype on my *laisser-passer* with the classic lineaments of the original, and after looking wise, told me to move on. When we got up to the Boulevard there was great cheering, and we came out on a thin file of French cavalry, which was on its way through town from the Gare du Midi. The crowd was mad with enthusiasm and the soldiers, although plainly very tired, pulled their strength together every now and then to cry, "*Vive la Belgique!*" There were crowds on the Boulevards, waiting for news from *là-bas*. A few French officers were going about in cabs, and each time that one appeared the crowd went mad. The officers were smiling and saluting, and every now and then one stood up in his place and cheered for Belgium. In twenty minutes or so, I saw that we could get through, so started for home and bed.

When we got to the Porte de Namur, we heard frenzied cheering down by the Porte Louise. The chauffeur is a regular old war horse who does not want to miss a trick. He cast a questioning glance over his shoulder; and, catching my nod, put on full speed down the Boulevard until we came to a solid crowd banked along the line of march of more French cavalry. The people in the crowd had bought out the nearby shops of cigars and cigarettes and chocolate and small flasks of brandy, and as each man rode by, he was loaded up with as much as he could carry. The defile had been going on for over an hour, but the enthusiasm was still boundless. All the cafés around the Porte Louise sent out waiters and waitresses with trays of beer to meet the troops as they came into the Avenue Louise. Each man would snatch a glass of

beer, swallow it as he rode along and hand it back to others who were waiting with empty trays a hundred yards or so down the line of march. The men were evidently very tired, and it was an effort for them to show any appreciation of their reception, but they made the effort and croaked out, "*Vive la Belgique!*" The French and British troops can have anything they want in this country. They will be lucky, though, if they escape without acute indigestion.

Yesterday afternoon, as I was coming out of the chancery of the British Legation, a little cockney messenger in uniform came snorting into the court on a motor-cycle. As he got off he began describing his experiences, and wound up his story of triumphant progress---"And when I got to the Boulevards I ran down a blighter on a bicycle and the crowd gave me an ovation!"

More troubles to-day about the German Legation. The *État-Major* gave orders that nobody but I should be allowed to enter. The laymen who have the onerous duty of protecting the Legation held a council of war, and decided that this precluded them from allowing food to go in; so when the waitress from the Grand Veneur with the lunch of the crowd inside came along, she was turned back and told I should have to go with her. I went around to the Legation and fixed it up with the guard. A few minutes ago the waitress came back with word that more bread and butter was wanted, but that the guard had changed and that she was again barred out. Monsieur de Leval and I went around again and fortunately found some one from the *État-Major* who was there for inspection. He promised to get proper orders issued and now we hope that we shall not be obliged to take in every bite under convoy.

There are ominous reports to-day of a tremendous German advance in this direction, and it is generally believed that there will be a big engagement soon near

Haelen, which is on the way from Liège to Tirlemont. Communications are cut, so I don't quite see where all the news comes from.

**After dinner.**---News sounds better to-night. Although there is nothing very definite, the impression is that the Belgians have come out victorious to-day in an engagement near Tirlemont. I hope to get some news later in the evening.

During a lull in the proceedings this afternoon, I got in Blount's car and went out to Brooks, to see his horses and arrange to have him send them in for our use every afternoon. He came over here a few months ago to spend the rest of his life in peace and quiet. It looks as though he wouldn't get much of either.



The Marquis de Villalobar, Spanish Minister at Brussels



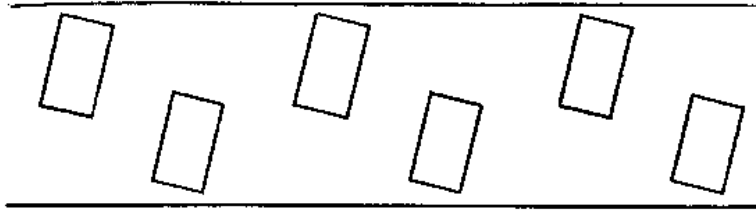
A barbed wire entanglement at Antwerp



The Garde Civique's idea of a barbed wire entanglement at the beginning of the war, (Taken at the end of the Avenue Louise)

The Avenue de Tervueren, a broad boulevard with a parkway down the centre, is the most direct way into town from the scene of the fighting, and there has been a general belief that the Germans might rush a force into town in motors that way. In order to be ready for anything of the sort, a barricade has been made of heavy tram

cars placed at right angles across the road, so that they do not absolutely stop traffic, but compel motors to slow down and pick their way, thus :



It is close work getting through, and can only be done at a snail's pace.

The latest news we have is that the nearest large German force is just 38 miles away from Brussels.

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/GibsonTC.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://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140812%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20INCOMUNICADO.pdf>

French version :

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140812%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](http://www.museedelavilledebruxelles.be/fileadmin/user_upload/publications/Fichier_PDF/Fonte/Journal_de%20Oguerre_de_Paul_Max_bdef.pdf)