

Brussels, August 19, 1914. --- Yesterday morning began with a visit from our old friend, Richard Harding Davis, who was still quite wroth because I had not waited for him to arrange for his passes and go with me on my trip. If we had, there would have been no trip, as he was not equipped until afternoon. After lunch he started off boldly for Namur, but got turned back before he reached Wavre, where there had been a skirmish with Uhlans. He was sore and disgusted.

While he was in my office, another troop arrived composed of Irwin Cobb, John McCutcheon, the cartoonist, Lewis and a few others. Later in the day, Will Irwin came in with news that he was closely followed by others. McCutcheon is a great friend of the Minister, and makes this his headquarters.

The Minister took them out to get *laisser-passeurs*. While they were away, Sir Francis Villiers came in and showed me a telegram from the Foreign Office, stating that British newspapers and news associations had, been requested to recall their correspondents, as they had already done great harm by the news they had given out. He was also to request the Belgian Government to refuse permits of any sort to the press, and get all foreign correspondents out of the country. The Belgian Government realised the importance of this, and has consequently shut down the lid tight.

There was supposed to have been a fair-sized cavalry engagement near Charleroi, in which six regiments of German cavalry were chewed up. We have no details, but it looked as though they were lured into a trap. Practically no news of the operations is leaking out. It looks as though Kitchener had remarked, "We will go into that house where William Hohenzollern is breaking the furniture, and we will close the door and pull down the blinds, and when we get through, we will come out and tell people about it."

Yesterday was just a day of work with a great deal of beating people on the back and assuring them that their lives are not in danger just because the Court has gone to Antwerp. They all seem to be convinced that their throats are going to be cut immediately.

This morning we had the usual deluge of newspaper men and correspondents. The Minister went off with the Spanish Minister to call on the military authorities, who are the only ones with whom we now have any relations, and while he was gone, Sir Francis came in and announced that he had been ordered to leave for Antwerp and place his Legation and British interests under our charge. The news is that the German cavalry in considerable force is marching toward Brussels. The military authorities are getting ready to defend the city, which is quite a futile proceeding, as the available forces are inadequate, so that the only result will be that a lot of innocent people will be killed quite incidentally. The Governor expects to resist about as far as the ring of inner boulevards, which are about four blocks farther in than we are. Our street is probably one of the principal ones by which the Germans would enter. A hundred yards farther out there is a big railroad barricade, where a stand would probably be made, so that our Legation would undoubtedly get a fair share of the wild shots from both sides. The cellar is being made ready for occupancy during the shindy, if it comes. The Burgomaster came in to say that he had a house prepared for our occupancy in the safe part of town; but we were not prepared to abandon the Legation and declined with sincere thanks for his thoughtfulness.

I went over and saw Sir Francis and the Legation staff just as they were leaving. They refused to have their plans upset by any little thing like a German advance, so had their lunch peacefully at the usual hour and then left in motors.

At seven o'clock Cobb, McCutcheon, and the rest of the crowd, were due at my house, so I gathered up Minister, the Consul-General, and Blount, and repaired thither. Davis and Morgan turned up a little late, but nothing has been heard of the rest of the crowd so far---10:30 P. M. They were to have dined here, but have not appeared or sent word.

Crowds of people are pouring in from the east in all stages of panic, and some small forces of cavalry have also retreated into the city, looking weary and discouraged. There has evidently been a rout. Further than that, we know nothing so far.

Several of the wives of high Belgian officials have come in this evening, having received word from their husbands to put themselves under our protection. There is nothing we can do for them, particularly at this time.

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/19140819%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20INCOMUNICADO.pdf>

French version :

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140819%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