

**Brussels, August 22, 1914.** --- Another day with much to do and no great results.

This morning, at 7 o'clock, General von Jarotzky arrived at the Legation and was all smiles. It appears that my action, in making known my displeasure at his behaviour and that of his staff, had a good effect. We have heard, from several sources, that he blew up everybody in sight yesterday afternoon when he came out from the Burgomaster's office and learned that I had departed in bad temper. He knows that nobody dares to oppose his acts or views, but just the same he gave them fits for not having made me stay and attend to my case. Be that as it may, he appeared with his Chief of Staff, and sent up a message that brought the Minister down in his pajamas and dressing gown. He expressed great regret for the "misunderstanding" of yesterday evening, and assured the Minister that there would be no further cause for complaint on our part. He had in his hand the telegram which we had sent him the evening before---the very same telegram which we had been trying to get off ever since the German occupation of the city. He had signed each page of the message, and had affixed his stamp with an order that it be immediately transmitted. He explained to the Minister that the best thing to do was for him to take it in person to the office of the Director of the Bureau of Telegraphs, who had already received instructions on the subject.



Types of Belgian  
cavalrymen



Civilian volunteers  
going out to dig  
trenches around  
Antwerp



The King of the Belgians (centre) giving orders in the field during the battle at H---



Pass issued by General von Jarotzky, the first German commander in Brussels, to enable Mr. Gibson to go through the lines to Antwerp.

The servants were thrown into a perfect panic by the arrival of the *Généraux*. It took some argument to convince them that the Germans would hardly need to send two generals to take them into custody, even if they had any reason to desire them as prisoners.

About ten o'clock I was starting to go down to the telegraph office, to send the messages, when the Spanish Minister drove up in his big green car with the Spanish flag flying at the fore. We told him our story, whereupon he announced that he also had telegrams to send and that he would go with us. We drove in state to the telegraph office, and found that the entrance which had been indicated to us was the alley through which the mail wagons drive in the good days when there are any. Before an admiring crowd, we descended and made our way among Prussian troopers through the noisome alley to a small side door, where we were stopped by a sentry who stuck a bayonet in our general direction and said we could go no further. I was immediately thrust into the foreground as the brilliant German

scholar; and, limbering up my heavy German artillery, I attacked him. The sentry blanched, but stood his ground. An officer came up as reinforcements, but was also limited to the German tongue; so I had to keep it up, with two full-grown Ministers behind me thinking up impossible things to be translated into the hopeless tongue. The officer, who was a genial soul, announced as though there were no use ever again to appear at that particular place, that the instruments had all been removed, and that there was absolutely no way of sending any messages--no matter from whom they came. We told him that we had come at the special request of the General himself. He replied that that made no difference whatever; that if there were no wires and no instruments, there was no possible way of sending the messages. After three or four repetitions, the Minister and I began to understand that there was no use haggling about it; but the Spanish Minister was not so lightly to be turned aside and took up the cudgels, himself bursting into the German language. He stood his ground valiantly in the face of a volley of long words, but he did not get any forrader. Prince Ernst de Ligne came in with a permit from the General to send his messages, and joined forces with the Spanish Minister; but the poor officer could only shrug his shoulders and smile and repeat what he had already said a score of times. Mr. Whitlock and I began to laugh, and had a hard time to control ourselves. Finally we prevailed upon them to return to the Hôtel de Ville. The Minister was beginning to get even madder than he was yesterday, when I got back with my story of the way I had spent the afternoon, going from one wild goose chase to another. We got the Burgomaster in his private office, and placed our troubles before him. He understood the importance of the matter and sent for the General. He appeared in short order, clicked his heels, and inquired whether we had come in regard to the matter of telegrams. The old fox knew perfectly well that we had, and was ready for us. We had come to the conclusion---which I had

reached yesterday afternoon and held all by myself---that the old man was jockeying.

He listened to what we had to say, and then said that there was no means of communication with the outside world; that he had just learned it a few minutes before. It is hardly necessary to say that he had been fully posted from the minute he set foot in the town. The Spanish Minister was rather sarcastic about his opinion of a General who would venture to occupy a capital without being in possession of means of telegraphic communication. The old soldier was in no mood for argument on abstract questions, and was playing for too big stakes to stop and dicker, so he passed this over lightly and suggested that we go back and discuss with the Director-General of Telegraphs the possibilities of reëstablishing communications--  
- Then the Spanish Minister let loose on him, and announced that it was not consistent with the dignity of representatives of World Powers to spend their time standing in back alleys disputing with soldiers who barred the way and refused to honour the instructions of their General. He threw in hot shot until the effect told. He said plainly that the General was full of fair words and promises and agreed to anything that was asked of him, but that when we went to do the things he had authorised, we were baffled by subordinates that took it upon themselves to disregard these orders---the intimation being cleverly conveyed that their action might not be unconnected with instructions from above. The old man then dropped his bluff, and asked what we wanted. We asked that he send for the Director-General, and give him, in our presence, the instructions and authorisation necessary to enable him to reëstablish communication with the outside world, and instruct him to receive and send all official messages for the Legations of neutral Powers. There was no way out, short of flatly refusing to give us our right to communicate with our governments, so the Director-General was sent for and the Burgomaster wrote out, at our dictation, the most general and comprehensive orders to meet our wishes

in all matters of official business. The General signed the order and instructed the Director-General to go ahead.

The Director-General was a poor soul who could see nothing but technical difficulties in everything that was proposed. He reluctantly agreed to everything that he was told to do, and there is no telling when our stories will get off. He told us that when the Germans had occupied the telegraph bureau, instead of simply disconnecting the instruments and placing a man there to see that communication was not reëstablished, the officer in command had battered down the door leading to the roof and had slashed all the wires with his sabre. As there were three or four hundred wires leading out of the office, it will be a tremendous job to get them all together again.

We also took occasion to arrange for the issuance of *sauf conduits* for all the members of the Legations and for such members of the foreign colonies under our protection as we care to vouch for. Food is getting very scarce because of the enormous demands of the Germans, and we told von Jarotzky that we should expect that he make arrangements to see that our colonies should not suffer from the requisitions---that ample food be reserved to keep them all as long as it might be found necessary for them to stay here. He agreed to this, but I don't see just how he is to arrange it in practice. There are about fifty thousand men camping within a few miles of Brussels, and another Army Corps is now marching in. The food for all the people must be supplied by---the city---all importations from the outside world have been suspended for days. It is a pretty bad situation, and it will probably get a great deal worse before long. I don't know whether we shall get down to eating horse and dog, but it is not altogether improbable. That is one of these things that it is interesting to read about afterward.

We spent nearly two hours at the Hôtel de Ville, and got in a good deal of talk that will be of service to all sorts of people. When we got back, we found the chancery full of people who were waiting for us to tell them just how they could send telegrams and letters, and get passports and permits to pass through the lines in all possible directions. Before leaving I had dictated a bulletin which was posted in the hallway, stating that there were no communications with the outside world by rail, telegraph or post, and that no *laisser-passers* would be granted by the authorities until conditions had changed, and that the Legation could not issue any sort of papers which would enable people to leave in safety.

About four o'clock, McCutcheon, Irwin and Cobb breezed in, looking like a lot of tramps. Several days ago they had sailed blissfully away to Louvain in a taxi, which they had picked up in front of the hotel. When they got there, they got out and started to walk about to see what was going on, when, before they could realise what was happening, they found themselves in the midst of a Belgian retreat, hard-pressed by a German advance. They were caught between the two, and escaped with their lives by flattening themselves up against the side of a house while the firing continued. When the row was over, they were left high and dry with no taxi--of course it had been seized by the retreating troops---and with no papers to justify their presence in Louvain at such a time. They decided that the best thing to do was to go straight to the German headquarters and report. They were received well enough, and told to lodge themselves as best they could and stay indoors until it was decided what was to be done with them. They were told that they might be kept prisoners here, or even sent to Berlin, but that no harm would come to them if they behaved themselves. The order had gone out that if a single shot was fired at the German troops, from the window of any house, everybody in the house was to be immediately taken out and shot. Not wishing to risk any such unpleasant end, they rented all the front rooms of a house and spread themselves through all the rooms,

so that they could be sure that nobody did any slaughtering from their house. They were there for three days, and were told to-day that they might take themselves hence. They came back to Brussels in the same clothes that they had worn for the past three days, unshaven and dirty. When they drove up to the front door this afternoon, they were nearly refused admittance as being too altogether disreputable.



A Belgian machine  
gun battery drawn by  
dogs



Types of Belgian  
infantrymen



King Albert  
and General  
von Emmich  
who  
commanded  
the German  
troops at  
Liège. Taken  
in 1913 when  
General von  
Emmich came  
to Liège on a  
visit of  
courtesy.

This evening, when I went to see my old friend the General, just before dinner, he told me that he had had news of a great battle near Metz, in which the French army

had been cut off and practically destroyed, with a loss of 45,000 prisoners. It sounds about as probable as some of the other yarns. In view of the fact that my friend had no telegraphic communication, I was curious to know where he got his information, but my gentle queries did not bring forth any news on that point.

The Germans now expect to establish themselves for some time here in Brussels. They are going to occupy the various governmental departments, and it is quite possible that for some time we shall have to deal exclusively with them. The Government to which we are accredited has faded away, and we, are left here with a condition and not a theory. We shall have to deal with the condition, and I am not at all sure that the condition will not require some pretty active dealing with. Functionaries are to be brought from Berlin to administer the various departments, so that it is evidently expected that the occupation is not to be of a temporary character.

**Later.**---After writing the foregoing, I went upstairs and listened to some of the tales of the four people who were tied up at Louvain. Now that they are safely out of it, they can see the funny side of it, but it was certainly pretty dangerous while it lasted. Monsieur de Leval is overcome with admiration for their sang-froid, and marvels at the race of men we breed.

They seem to have made themselves solid with the Germans before they had been there long; it would be hard for anybody to resist that crowd any length of time. Of course they never saw their taxi again after getting out to scout for the battle, and whenever the Major who had the duty of keeping them under surveillance came to take a look at them, Cobb would work up a sob-shaken voice and plead for liberty and permission to return to Brussels. He was always at some pains to explain that it was not his life he was worrying about, but the haunting thought of that taxi running



up at the rate of fifty centimes every three minutes. After a while he got the Major's funny bone located, and then all was well. He so completely got into the officer's good graces that he promised to send us word that they were safe and well,---and then failed to do so.

While the Germans occupied the city, all inhabitants were required to be indoors by eight o'clock; a light had to be kept in every window, and the blinds left open, so that any one moving could be clearly seen from the street. The windows themselves were to be closed. Dosch said he woke up about four o'clock one morning with his head splitting; the lamp was smoking and the air vile with smoke and smell. He decided he would prefer to be shot than die of headache, so deliberately got up and opened his window. The story loses its point by the fact that after violating this strict rule, he was not taken out and shot.

They said it was really pretty dreadful. From their window, they saw, every little while, a group of soldiers lead some poor frightened Belgian to a little café across the street; several officers were sitting at one of the tables on the sidewalk, holding a sort of drumhead court martial. While they were examining the case, a squad would be marched around behind the railroad station. A few minutes later the prisoner would be marched around by another way, and in a few minutes there would be a volley and the troops would be marched back to their post; then, after a little while, a stretcher would be brought out with a body in civilian clothes, a cloth over the face. Some of the prisoners were women, and there were screams before the shots were fired. It must have been a dreadful ordeal to go through.

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>

**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/19140822%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20INCOMUNICADO.pdf>

Original Spanish version about Dinant :

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140822%20PAYRO%20DINANT%20SP%20DOS%20REPRESENTANTES%20ARGENTINOS%20MUERTOS%20EN%20LA%20GUERRA.pdf>

French version :

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140822%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20INCOMUNICADO%20FR.pdf>

French version about the German atrocities in Tamines :

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140822%20PAYRO%20RESSUSCITE%20TAMINES.pdf>

French version about Dinant :

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140822%20PAYRO%20DINANT%20FR%20DOS%20REPRESENTANTES%20ARGENTINOS%20MUERTOS%20EN%20LA%20GUERRA.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)