

Brussels, September 13, 1914. --- Ever since the 9th I have been off on my little jaunt to Antwerp, and, have not been able to get a line on paper.

I was not at all sure that I was going to get away at all, until I got down to the Legation on Wednesday morning and found my *laisser-passer*, signed by von der Goltz, waiting for me---another to add to my already large and interesting collection. With it was a letter from my friend and well-wisher. Baron von der Lancken, who said that an officer would be assigned to accompany us as far as the German outposts. He suggested that I take along a large white flag to be hoisted over the motor for the run between the lines. The note and *laisser-passer* had arrived at the Legation about one o'clock in the morning, and had looked so important that the slaves waked the Minister from a deep sleep to receive them.



Pass issued by Field-Marshal von der Goltz to enable Mr. Gibson to pass through the German lines to Antwerp.

When I got to the office I found that Villalobar had not sent over his contribution of letters, so I ran up to the Legation and saw him. He bade me farewell as though I were off to certain death, and loaded me with a large bundle of letters and telegrams.

When I got back to the shop, I found my fellow-passenger, the Count de Woeste, waiting for me. He is a leader of the Catholic party which has been in power in Belgium for the past thirty years, and, although he is seventy-five years old, he is still a big figure in the little country. He behaved very well on the trip, and if I were a Belgian citizen I should vote for him on account of his good nerve.

We bowled off to headquarters, where I was mightily pleased to find that von Herwarth had assigned himself to the duty of taking us up to the outposts--just for a visit. It was the only satisfactory one I have had with him since he came. At headquarters there were always too many interruptions. My old travelling companion had a hard time to keep himself in hand and not enter upon a joint debate upon the war, its causes and justification. He did well, however, and my two passengers parted on good terms, even going to the extraordinary length of shaking hands at the outpost.

A big military motor, filled with armed men, was sent ahead to act as guide, and we followed along closely behind in a cloud of dust.

From the outskirts of Brussels right up to the German outposts at Hofstade, the fields were filled with German troops of every sort---infantry, lancers, heavy artillery, and even three or four large detachments of sailors in blue blouses and caps. All the men, except the sailors and a few of the Landsturm, who wear conspicuous blue uniforms, were in the new greenish grey, which is about the finest color that has yet seen active service. Frequently we drove several hundred yards beside a field before noticing that it was filled with soldiers. Several of the villages between Dieghem and Hofstade were partially burned, and there were evidences of shell fire---which to these peasants must be a perfectly convincing substitute for hell-fire---and of fighting at really close quarters. Between Perck and Hofstade, the

fields were covered with deep entrenchments, and over some of these were stuck dummy heads to draw hostile fire. Some, on the other hand, were fitted with Belgian caps picked up on the battle-field, evidently for the purpose of inducing Belgian troops to approach for a closer look before firing. Most of the big trees along the road had been cut down, and many houses razed to the ground so as to have a cleaner sweep for the artillery. At Dieghem, the German pilot-car picked up a naval officer who was to accompany us as far as the outposts and to inspect his men on the way back.

On the outskirts of Hofstade, under a brick railway bridge, we found the last German troops. They had some hard fighting here at the time of the last Belgian sortie, and the bridge and the surrounding houses showed evidences of shell fire.



A street in Louvain



Fixing on the white flag for the dash between the lines



Refugees from the villages near the Antwerp forts



Arrival in Antwerp of refugees from Malines

I was rather against putting up the white flag, but both Herwarth and the naval officer were most insistent that I should do so, saying that the country between the lines was filled with patrols, both Belgian and German; that they felt that hostilities

were to be commenced at any moment, and that any one who ventured into the district between the lines would stand a fine chance of being shot unless he carried a conciliatory emblem. They rigged up a long pole on the side of the car with a white flag about six feet square, and bidding a glad farewell to the representatives of Hohenzollern and Company, we started out to feel our way into Malines. About 500 yards beyond the bridge we sighted two Belgian bicycle patrols who, on seeing us, jumped off their machines and ran into an abandoned farmhouse. Knowing that they were at high tension, we crept up very slowly so that they might have a good look at us before trying their marksmanship. They were peeking over the window-ledge, with their rifles trained at us; but after a good look at the black clothes and white whiskers of M. de Woeste they pulled in their weapons and waved us to go ahead. About a kilometer farther on, we came around a turn in the road and nearly ran into the first Belgian outpost---six men and an officer. As we came around upon them they scurried behind stone walls and trees, and gave us the usual pleasant greeting of levelled rifles. As the most prudent things to do under such circumstances, the car was stopped, and I went ahead to parley. The officer proved to be young Z-----. He turned quite white when he got a good look at me, and remarked that it was fortunate they had not had a sight of us farther down the road, as we would certainly have been filled with lead.

He said that the Germans had tried three times that morning to get through the lines in cars flying the white flag, in one instance at least, with a machinegun in the car. As a result of this, the outposts had orders not to take any chance for the rest of the time intervening before the attack which was expected to begin at any minute.

Far be it from me to suggest that our friends had me put up the white flag, so as to offer proof of the Belgian savagery in firing on the white flag.

After this little experience, we took in our white flag and made the rest of our trip without trouble. We found outposts about every hundred yards, and were stopped at the point of the rifle each time; but as we got farther away from the outer lines the behaviour of the posts was noticeably less nervous, and when we got into Malines the mere sight of our papers was sufficient to let us freely through.

Since my last trip, the Belgians have been working steadily at their preparations for defence, and have accomplished wonders. Their large tracts of land, some of them forming natural routes, for entry between the forts, have been inundated with water from the canals so as to be quite impassable. Tremendous barbed wire entanglements form a broad barrier all around the outer and inner fortifications; they are so thick and so strongly braced that artillery fire would be practically useless against them, and cutting with wire nippers would be so slow that it could not be accomplished without a horrible loss of men.

There are any number of huge searchlights placed on the fortifications to sweep the skies for Zeppelins. Since my last visit, one Zeppelin had succeeded in getting over the town, but was surprised and dropped its whole cargo of 15 bombs in a distance of a few hundred yards, taking no lives and doing little material damage. Since then, several big craft have appeared at night, but have always been frightened away by the searchlights and the fire of the small vertical guns which have been ready for them.

All the villages which cluster around the fortifications have been razed to the ground, and the avenues of big trees have been cut down; it is a pretty dreadful sight.

I left M. de Woeste at the Grand Hotel, where the Cabinet is staying, and then made for the Saint Antoine. Had lunch with Sir Francis Villiers and Colonel

Fairholme, and got my first real news since the Prussian headquarters stopped issuing bulletins of German victories. Sir Francis showed me the telegrams he had received about the German check and retreat in France; and Prince Koudacheff, the Russian Minister, who joined us for coffee, vied with him by showing me his telegrams about the Russian advance in Eastern Prussia and in Austria.

After luncheon, I had some pow-wows on the subject that had brought me, and went to see various people for whom I had messages. They are a lot more cheerful than the last time I was in Antwerp, and are ready for anything.

From the Foreign Office, I went to the Consulate General, where I found a mountain of letters and telegrams. Got off my cables, and answered as much of the other correspondence as was absolutely necessary---no more.

On my way back to the hotel, I ran into General Jungbluth coming out of the Palace, and was promptly hauled inside for gossip.

The Queen, who has very properly come back from England, walked in on us and stopped to hear the news from Brussels.

I got back to the hotel, and found all the colleagues waiting for me to hear the latest news from Brussels. I played my part, and was nearly torn to pieces in their eagerness for news from the town where there is none. They were all there except the Papal Nuncio, who is most unhappy in the midst of war's alarms and hardly budes from the episcopal palace.

After dinner I was again asked to go to the Grand Hôtel to see the Prime Minister. He had nothing startling to say, but was anxious to know what was going on in

Brussels. He showed me his telegrams from France, England and Russia, and his maps with the recent movements worked out with little flags.

Monsieur de Brocqueville told me an interesting incident that had taken place at Ghent. It seems that when the Germans arrived there, they sent in an officer and several soldiers to arrange for requisitions, etc., a promise having been given that they would not be molested. Of course, the whole town was on the *qui vive*, and everybody had been warned to refrain from incurring their displeasure. Just as the German motor passed in front of our Consulate, a Belgian armoured car came charging in from Antwerp, knowing nothing of the presence of the Germans, and upon seeing the enemy uniform, opened fire, wounding the officer and one of the men.

That was enough to start things, and the town would probably be in ruins to-day but for the quick thinking and action of Van Hee, the American Vice Consul. He plunged down the staircase, seized the Burgomaster, who happened to be present, pushed him into a motor with the wounded men and went straight to the German headquarters to explain that the attack had been made by two men from Antwerp who knew nothing of the agreement reached between the city and the German forces, and to plead that no reprisals should be made upon the city. The general said that he was prepared to accept the statement of the Vice-Consul on this matter, and that he would not therefore visit retribution on the town if the requisitions which he had demanded were promptly furnished. The requisitions were heavy, and he was apparently afraid that they might not be sent. He said that he would send in troops to occupy the town until the supplies requisitioned were actually in his possession, but finally agreed to refrain from doing so on condition that the Vice-Consul should give his word of honour that the supplies should be forthcoming.

Van Hee took this responsibility, and the General agreed to keep his troops outside the town. When they got back to Ghent, the Military Governor disavowed the arrangement on the ground that the Burgomaster had no right to enter into an agreement with the Germans and that he, as Military Governor, was the only one with any authority to deal with them. He therefore declared that no supplies should be sent. The Burgomaster telegraphed the Prime Minister in Antwerp, and placed the entire situation before him, and Monsieur de Brocqueville promptly telegraphed back that since the American Vice-Consul had given his word of honour to the German General it was impossible to disavow the agreement, and that the supplies should be sent out immediately. This was a pretty high stand for the Belgians to take, but they feel that Van Hee saved Ghent from destruction, and are correspondingly grateful to him.

Getting around Antwerp in the evening is quite an undertaking at this time; no street lamps are lighted, all the window shades lined with black, and heavy black shades are placed over the small electric lights in the courtyards of hotels, etc.---all of this to keep from giving any indication to the Zeppelins as to where to drop their visiting cards. A heavy detachment of soldiers guards the approach to the Saint Antoine, and there are patrols in all the streets. The few motors allowed on the street have no lights, and are stopped by all the patrols, who do not call out but rise up silently in front of you and demand the password. It is a ticklish business finding one's way. The big searchlights on the forts sweep the skies from nightfall until dawn, making a wonderful sort of fireworks.

When I got back to the hotel I found Prince Caraman Chimay waiting for me with a message from the Queen. Also poor Prince Ernest de Ligne, whose son, Badouin, was killed in one of the armoured motors several days ago.

Young de Ligne, who was a volunteer, was in one of three armoured cars that went out on a reconnaissance toward the German lines. Just before entering a sunken road between two fields they stopped a Flemish peasant and asked him whether there were any Germans anywhere about. The peasant told them that three Uhlans had been seen a short time before but they had gone away. The three motors, de Ligne in the first, started down and were attacked by about forty Germans under command of a major. De Ligne was shot in the head and died shortly afterwards. The man who took his place at the wheel was killed, and several others of the party were also badly wounded and have since died. The third motor came up from some little distance behind and opened on the Germans, killing or wounding nearly all of them, including the officer, who was killed.

A young chap named Strauss, whose mother was an American, had the mitrailleuse in his car, and stood upright, firing upon the Germans without being touched by the heavy rifle fire that they directed against him. When the Germans had been put to flight he and the other survivors got the three cars into running order, and brought them all back to Antwerp, where de Ligne and two of the others died.

Prince Ernest had a hard time getting through from Brussels, and was fired on several times by the German troops, who were even more nervous than in the morning, when I came through. One of his nephews has also been killed, and another nephew, Prince Henri de Ligne, is in the aviation corps, and has been in the thick of it ever since the beginning of the war. He and his wife are also staying at the Saint Antoine.

On Thursday morning I got caught in another avalanche of telegrams and had to spend a couple of hours at the Consulate-General polishing off and finishing business. Stopped in at the palace on the way back and saw General Jungbluth, who

showed me the latest telegrams. I gathered up what newspapers I could beg or buy and stuffed them into a military pouch to take back. Had an early lunch, gathered up M. de Woeste and Faura, whom I was to bring back, and started about one. We got through Malines, across the only one of the three bridges which is left, and started down the bank of the canal toward Hofstade, where Herwarth was to meet us at two o'clock. There was heavy firing by small guns ahead and a certain amount of protective firing from the forts behind us, with the shells singing high above our heads, but we thought that it was probably aimed further to the south and that we could get through.

Just at the edge of Malines we were startled by a tremendous report near-by, and on getting out to reconnoitre I discovered a Belgian battery, which had been established near the Convent of the Dames de Coloma. The commanding officer of the battery, Major Nyssens, whom I had known in Brussels, advised us to wait a little to see if there was a lull in the fighting, so that we would get through. We went into the convent to wait and were warmly received by a little Irish nun, who showed us the park and pictures by way of entertainment, although we felt a much greater interest in the banging of the battery. After a bit Major Nyssens sent out a messenger to the farthest battery to see whether they were prepared to stop firing for a little while to let us scuttle through to Hofstade. Presently an answer came back that at 2:10 the firing would be, stopped for twelve minutes to let us through. We were in the motor ready to start when another messenger came from the outer battery saying that the Germans were prepared to move up their battery from the bridge at Hofstade---the very spot we were making for, if there were any lull in the firing and that the Belgian battery could not stop without endangering its position.

We then decided to go back to Malines and to try a direct road by way of Sempst and Villevorde. On parting I gave Nyssens all my cigars, knowing I should find

plenty when I got back to Brussels, and he, in a burst of gratitude, gave me a tiny revolver taken off a dead German officer a few hours before. Immediately after getting the revolver Nyssens' orderly had handled it rather carelessly, and shot himself in the stomach. To make sure of doing nothing equally foolish, I took out the remaining cartridges and chucked them in the canal as we rode back to Malines.

About a kilometer out of Malines we ran into a considerable detachment of Belgian infantry and lancers and a large armoured motor with two mitrailleuses. We were told that the Belgians had taken and retaken Sempst three times during the day, and while neither side occupied the town at that precise moment they were both advancing on it, and that it might be rather warm for ordinary motors. They finally agreed to let us talk to the commanding officer, who turned out to be none other than Colonel Cumont, the owner of the building occupied by the Legation.

He was up on a railway embankment, lying on his stomach between the rails, watching some German patrols through a pair of big field glasses, and when we hailed him, rolled gracefully over the side, and came down to talk to us. He had been out on the track most of the time for three days and was a rather disreputable-looking person, but apparently glad of a chance to talk with someone from the outside world.

He said he thought we would have time to get through before the row began, and in any event he would warn his men so that if we came scuttling back we would be given the right of way to safety.

We passed several Belgian patrols along the way and finally got into the town, which showed clear evidences of fighting; some of the houses were burned to the ground, and all that were standing had their doors and windows smashed, furniture

broken, and strewn about the floors with broken bottles and dishes, mattresses and goodness knows what else; and above all arose that terrible smell of burnt flesh.

We were nearly through the town when we were hailed by a detachment of about twenty Belgians, who had got through and occupied the grounds of a villa on the edge of the village. We stopped the car, and I got out and went ahead, they remaining with leveled rifles, in their usual hospitable manner. When I got to within twenty feet of them we heard the whirr of a machine gun---which the Belgian soldiers call a *cinema* -and a German armoured car poked its nose around the corner for a look-see. It was firing high to draw a return fire and locate any Belgians there might be in the town, but they all scurried behind cover, closely followed by me. They were taking no chances, however, and called me to stay in the middle of the road. Without wasting any time in formality I made clear my identity, and, on being shown through a breach in the wall a disagreeable-looking body of German infantry and lancers about a half a mile away approaching through a field, I decided that we were on the wrong road and made back for the motor.

I told my passengers what was up, and that we had to go back to Malines. M. de Woeste, however, was all for going through on the valid plea that he had no clean linen and did not want to spend another night out of Brussels. Nevertheless we turned around and started back, only to rush into the big Belgian armoured car which Colonel Cumont, hearing firing, had sent down to rescue us and cover our retreat. This car stayed in the village for a few minutes to meet the German car, fired a few shots at it, and then came back to the outposts.

We then tried getting out toward the west from Malines, but soon came to a point where the road was inundated, and had to turn back for the third time. It was then getting pretty late in the afternoon, and even M. de Woeste had to admit that we had

best come back to Antwerp rather than try to make a roundabout journey to Brussels after dark.

All the way back into Antwerp we met Belgian forces advancing to the attack. They are getting to know the flag better every day and we were greeted with waving hands and cheers everywhere we went. When nearly in town, a young chap ran out of the ranks to where we were waiting for them to get by, grabbed me by the shoulder, and said:

"I am born an American."

"Where were you born?"

"Aurora, Illinois. My father worked in -----'s glycerine works."

"Who do you know in Aurora?"

"I know Mr. Evans and Mr.----- and Mr.----- and Mr. *Beaupré*." (3)

"What's your name?"

Just then a non-commissioned officer came along and ordered him back into the ranks; the motor started ahead, and I lost track of the boy in a cloud of dust.

At the edge of town we caught up with a British Legation motor, which was stopped at a railroad barricade. Its occupants roared with laughter when they saw us, and Colonel Fairholme gloated particularly, as he had prophesied that we would not get through. When we got back to the hotel we were met with more laughter. It was the great joke of the week to see the only people who had previously been successful in running the lines, caught like the rest of them. I was not at all down in the mouth, as Antwerp was most interesting, and I had left only because I had felt it

my duty to get back to work and to keep the Minister from worrying. When I saw that there was no way of getting through I gladly accepted the decree of fate.

When we got back to Antwerp I soon learned that it would be out of the question to get back to Brussels the next day, or perhaps even the day after that. The Belgians were advancing to an enveloping movement and all the surrounding country was to be covered with Belgian troops in an endeavour to deal a smashing blow to the Germans and compel them to bring back more troops from the front in France. Colonel Fairholme asked me to accompany him to the front next morning, and I accepted with an alacrity which startled him.

After dinner I made another excursion into the darkness and told Monsieur de Woeste that there was no prospect of getting back to Brussels the next day. His colleagues, who were there also, impressed upon him the futility of going, and he finally resigned himself to staying, although he kept insisting that he infinitely preferred danger to boredom, which was his lot so long, as he had nothing to do but sit around the hotel.

Friday morning while I was waiting for the Colonel to get ready and was doing my little errands down town, there came a great roaring of a crowd, and the chauffeur, knowing my curiosity, put on steam and spurted down to the boulevards just in time to run into a batch of three hundred German prisoners being brought in. They were a dejected-looking crowd, most of them Landsturm, haggard and sullen. The crowd, mindful of the things the Germans have been doing to this little country, were in no friendly mood, but did nothing violent. There was only a small guard of Belgian Garde Civique to escort the prisoners, but there were no brickbats or vegetables. The people limited themselves to hoots and catcalls and hisses---which were pretty thick. And even this was frowned upon by the authorities. Within a couple of hours

the Military Governor had posted a proclamation begging the people of Antwerp to maintain a more dignified attitude and to refrain from any hostile demonstration against other prisoners. This batch was surrounded, and caught at Aerschot, where the Germans are said to have committed all sorts of atrocities for the past three weeks. Among the prisoners was the commanding officer, who was accused of being responsible for a lot of the outrages. He was examined by the military court, which sits for the purpose, and admitted having done most of the things of which he was accused, pleading in his own defence that he had done them only in obedience to superior orders, to which he had protested. The soldiers who made the capture disclaimed a large part of the credit for it on the ground that most of the Germans were drunk and that they were too dazed to get to their arms. Stories of this sort keep piling in from every side.

We got away at eleven to Lierre, where the King has established his headquarters for his movement. The road lay to the southeast and was through country I had not traversed before. The aspect was the same, however-long stretches of destroyed houses and felled trees, barbed-wire entanglements and inundated fields. It is a mournful sight.

Little Lierre was unharmed, and I hope it may remain so. The Grande Place was filled with staff motors, and there was a constant coming and going of motors and motorcycles bearing messengers to and from the field of operations. Headquarters was established in the Hotel de Ville, which bears on its tower the date 1369---a fine old building, not large, but beautiful.

In the morning a message had come ordering Colonel DuCane back to England. He was out in the field, and we had to wait until he came in to deliver it to him. The King was also away, but we put in our time talking with the officers. on duty as to

the movement and its progress, and then went out for a stroll around the town. We looked into the old church, and I stopped and bought an officer's forage cap as a souvenir of the place. By the time we had poked around the neighbourhood and inspected the other *Sehenswürdigkeiten* of the town it was lunch time and we joined an officers' mess in the back room of a little café on the square, and then, to kill time, sat in front of another café and had coffee and a cigar.

We could not get started until Colonel DuCane had returned and received his message, so we sat in front of our little café and growled. It was maddening to waste our time there while the guns were thundering all around us and we knew from the signs of activity at headquarters that big things were toward. After a time a little man, the Senator for the district, came out and asked us into his house, directly across the street from the Hôtel de Ville. It was raining hard and we were ready for a change, so we accepted gladly and were entertained with champagne and cigars to the music of falling rain and booming cannon.

Our Senator was very much down in the mouth about the situation in general and wanted to talk about it. The Colonel told him of the bulletins that had been published in Antwerp as to the progress of the campaign, and as this went on he cheered up visibly minute by minute---whether as a result of the good news or the champagne, I don't know..

The Colonel was called away after a time to talk to Lord Kitchener over the telephone. Kitchener keeps himself informed directly as to the progress of operations and the knowledge that he may drop in over the telephone at any minute gives his officers a very comforting feeling that they are not forgotten

Finally, after dark, Colonel DuCane and Captain Ferguson came in, and we got under way. It was too late to go forward with hopes of seeing anything, but it was

evident that things would be as hot as ever the next day and that I could not hope to get my charges back to Brussels. Accordingly the Colonel's invitation was extended and accepted, and we turned back toward Antwerp considerably disappointed.

While we were waiting around trying to make up our minds---if any---I ran into young Strauss, the half-American, who was in the armoured car behind young de Ligne. He was really the principal hero of the occasion, having stood bolt upright in his car and riddled the German forces with his mitrailleuse until the few survivors turned and fled. He had with him two of the other survivors of his party. All of them had been decorated with the Order of Leopold for their behaviour. An order like that looks pretty well on a private's uniform, particularly when given with such good reason.

We had retreated inside the Hôtel de Ville during a particularly heavy downpour of rain, when in came the King, who had spent the whole day in the field with the troops. He was drenched to the skin, but came briskly up the steps, talking seriously with his aide-de-camp. He stopped and spoke with us all and took Colonel DuCane into his study and had a few minutes talk with him by way of farewell. The King shows up finely in the present situation and all the foreign military attachés are enthusiastic about his ability. He is in supreme command of the army and no detail is too insignificant for his attention.



At Malines---a good background for a photograph to send home to Germany



His Eminence, Cardinal Mercier, Archbishop of Malines

We got the password and made back for Antwerp in the dark, leaving Colonel DuCane and Captain Ferguson to spend the night at Lierre. We were in bad luck and got stopped at every railroad crossing along the way. Troop and supply trains were pouring down toward the front and Red Cross trains were bringing back the wounded in large numbers. Both sides must have suffered heavily during the day, and there may be several days more of this sort of fighting before there is a lull.

When we got back to the hotel we found Sir Francis waiting for us with a glowing telegram and an equally glowing face. It was the most enthusiastic message yet received from the British War Office, which has been very restrained in its daily bulletins. For the first time that day it spoke with a little punch, speaking of the "routed enemy" and their being "vigorously pressed." We tumbled through a hasty bath and got down to dinner in short order.

After dinner it was the same old performance of going over to the Grand Hôtel and labouring with Monsieur de Woeste, who was still bent on getting home to his clean linen without further delay. It took the united arguments of the Cabinet, which was in session, to convince him that it would be useless and foolish to try to get away.

Finally he yielded, with a worse grace than on the previous evening. I had a comfortable visit with several of the Ministers, who were glad to hear news of their families in Brussels, and asked me to remember all sorts of messages to be given on my return. I only hope that I shall not get the messages mixed and get too affectionate with the wrong people.

The Cabinet was going through the latest telegrams from the various fields of action. They even had some from Servia and were decidedly cheered up, a big change from the dogged determination with which they were facing bad news the last time I was in Antwerp.

Saturday morning the Colonel and I were called at six, and at seven we got away in a pouring rain over the same road to Lierre that we had travelled the day before. There was a big force of workmen hard at it in the vicinity of the outer forts, burning houses and chopping down trees and building barbed-wire entanglements. It is a scene of desolation, but it is necessary in a fight like this.

We found things moving rapidly at headquarters in Lierre. Messengers were pouring in and orders going out with twice the activity of the day before. The movement had been under way for two hours when we got there and the guns were booming all around. After learning as much as we could of the disposition of the troops we went out and stocked up with bread, cheese, and mineral water, and started forth to see what we could of the operations. We took along a young officer from headquarters to show us the road. We soon saw that he did not know the roads and could not even read a map, and had to take over that work ourselves. Colonel Fairholme and I went in my motor with the headquarters passenger and Colonel DuCane and Ferguson followed in their own car with an orderly. We got to Malines without difficulty and got out for a look at the Cathedral. It is a dreadful sight, all

the wonderful old fifteenth century glass in powder on the floor. Part of the roof is caved in and there are great gaping holes in the lawn, showing where the shells struck that fell short of their mark. A few of the surrounding houses, belonging to entirely peaceful citizens, were completely wiped out while they were getting the range. It is hard to see what useful military purpose is served by smashing churches and peaceful habitations, when there are no troops about the place. Malines was bombarded when the troops had withdrawn. It is hard to reconcile with *Gott mit uns*.

Before we left Lierre, nine troopers of the Landsturm were marched into the hallway of the Hotel de Ville, to be examined by the officer who is there for that purpose. They were a depressed lot who had run away and given themselves up, so as to be spared the hardships and dangers of the rest of the war. They answered questions freely, telling all they knew as to the disposition of troops and making their getaway toward the local lockup with great alacrity as soon as the word was given to move. Most of them were Bavarians. Colonel Fairholme speaks German like a native. He talked with these chaps, and there was some interesting conversation. They were all without enthusiasm for the war, and all expressed indignation at having been brought out of the country, maintaining that the Landsturm cannot be used for anything except the maintenance of order in the Empire. I think they are wrong about that, but this was no joint debate on German law, and no attempt was made to sooth their injured feelings. A lot of men were brought in while we were there, some of them prisoners taken during the fighting, but a great many of them fugitives who were sick of the war, and only asked to get off with a whole skin.

As they marched out of the hall, the King came in from the field for a look at the morning's telegrams. He had been out since long before daybreak, and was covered

with rain and mud. He shook himself vigorously, spraying everybody with raindrops, and then stopped to speak to us before going in for a cup of coffee and a look at the news.



The children of Antwerp played at soldiering through the siege



The nuns, scornful of danger, stayed where they could render the greatest service



German troops in front of Hôtel de Ville, Brussels



Types of von Arnim's troops

From Malines we made back along the northern side of the canal, in an endeavour to find the headquarters of the ---th Division. We went through a little village where all the inhabitants were standing in the road, listening to the cannonading, and spun out upon an empty and suspiciously silent country road. A little way out we found a couple of dead horses which the thrifty peasants had already got out and skinned. I didn't like the looks of it, and in a minute the Colonel agreed that he thought it did not look like a road behind the lines, but our little staff officer was cocksure that he knew just what he was talking about, and ordered the chauffeur to go ahead. Then

we heard three sharp toots on the horn of the car behind---the signal to stop and wait. And it came pulling up alongside with an inquiry as to what we meant by "barging" along this sort of a road which likely as not would land us straight inside the enemy's lines. There was a spirited discussion as to whether we should go ahead or go back and strike over through Rymenam, when we heard a shell burst over the road about half a mile ahead, and then saw a motor filled with Belgian soldiers coming back toward us full tilt. The Colonel stopped them and---learned that they had been out on a reconnaissance with a motor-cyclist to locate the German lines, which were found to be just beyond where the shell had burst, killing the motor-cyclist. It would have been a little too ignominious for us to have gone bowling straight into the lines and get taken prisoners. We turned around and left that road to return no more that way. We got about half-way up to Rymenam when we met some Belgian officers in a motor, who told us that a battery of the big French howitzers, which had just gone into action for the first time, were in a wood near H-----. We turned around once more, and made for H----- by way of Malines. We found the headquarters of the ---th Division, and went in and watched the news come in over the field telephone and telegraph, and by messengers on motor-cycles, bicycles and horses straight from the field. The headquarters was established in a little roadside inn about half a mile outside the town, and was as orderly as a bank. Officers sat at the various instruments and took notes of the different reports as they came in. Reports were discussed quickly but quietly, and orders sent out promptly but without confusion. The maps were kept up to the minute by changing the little flags to show the positions of the different troops right at the minute. There was telephone communication with the forts, and several times they were ordered to pour fire into a certain spot to cover an advance or a retreat of parts of the Belgian forces, and, at other times, to cease firing, so as to let Belgian troops cross or occupy the exact spot they had been bombarding. It was a wonderful sight to watch,

and it was hard to realise that this was merely a highly scientific business of killing human beings on a large scale. It was so business-like and without animus, that to anyone not knowing the language or conditions, it might have passed as a busy day in a war office commissary when ordering supplies and giving orders for shipment.

Just outside the headquarters was one of the fine German kitchen wagons with two fine Norman horses which had pulled it all the way from Germany. It had been stationed in the grounds of a château not far away, and three men of its crew were hard at work getting a meal when a little Belgian soldier with two weeks' growth of beard waltzed into the garden, shot one of the men dead and captured the other two. He disarmed them, put ropes around their necks and drove the kitchen to headquarters in triumph. He was proud as punch of his exploit, and, for that matter, so was everybody else around the place.

In a field of turnips a couple of hundred yards away from the headquarters were the howitzers. There were three of them in a row with three ammunition wagons. They had been sent here only a few days ago, and they were promptly put into action. They were planted here, slightly inside the range of the guns from the outer forts, and were able to drop shells six miles from where we stood, or about five miles outside the range of the fort guns. They toss a shell about two feet long, filled with deadly white powder, six miles in ten seconds, and when the shell strikes anything, "it thoes rocks at yeh!" as the darkey said about our navy guns. The battery was planted down behind a little clump of pines, and was dropping shells into a little village where there was a considerable force of Germans about to be attacked. The Germans must have been puzzled by this development, for they had counted on being able to advance safely up to the range of the forts, feeling sure that the Belgians had no powerful field guns of this sort.

We were introduced to the officers commanding the battery, and watched their work for nearly two hours. One of the officers was Count Guy d'Oultremont, adjutant of the Court, whom I had known in Brussels. He was brown as a berry, had lost a lot of superfluous flesh, and was really a fine-looking man. He had been in Namur, and had got away with the Belgian troops who went out the back door into France and came home by ship.

After we had been watching a little while, an aeroplane came circling around, evidently to spot the place where these deadly cannon were. It cruised around for some time in vain, but finally crossed straight overhead. As soon as we were located, the machine darted away to spread the news, so that the big German guns could be trained on us and silence the battery; but the Belgians were Johnny-at-the-rathole again, and he was winged by rifle fire from a crowd of soldiers who were resting near the headquarters. They killed the observer and wounded the pilot himself, to say nothing of poking a hole in the oil tank. The machine volplaned to earth a few hundred yards from where we were, and the pilot was made prisoner. The machine was hauled back to the village and shipped on the first outgoing train to Antwerp as a trophy.

We were leaving the battery and were slipping and sliding through the cabbages on our way back to the road, when we met the King on foot, accompanied only by an aide-de-camp, coming in for a look at the big guns. He stopped and spoke to us and finally settled down for a real talk, evidently thinking that this was as good a time as any other he was likely to find in the immediate future.

After talking shop with the two colonels, he turned to me for the latest gossip. He asked me about the story that the German officers had drunk his wine at the Palace in Laeken. I told him that it was generally accepted in Brussels, and gave him my

authority for the yarn. He chuckled a little and then said, in his quiet way, with a merry twinkle: "You know I never drink anything but water." He cogitated a minute and then, with an increased twinkle, he added: "And it was not very good wine!" He seemed to think that he had quite a joke on the Germans.

As we talked, the sound of firing came from the German lines not far away, and shrapnel began falling in a field on the other side of the road. The Germans were evidently trying to locate the battery in that way. Most of the shrapnel burst in the air and did no damage, but some of it fell to the ground before bursting and sent up great fountains of the soft black earth with a cloud of gray smoke with murky yellow splotches in it. It was not a reassuring sight, and I was perfectly willing to go away from there, but being a true diplomat, I remembered that the King ranked me by several degrees in the hierarchy, and that he must give the sign of departure. Kings seem powerless to move at such times, however, so we stayed and talked while the nasty things popped. His Majesty and I climbed to a dignified position on a pile of rubbish, whence we could get a good view up and down the road, and see the French guns which were in action again.

A little later Ferguson, who was standing not far away, got hit with a little sliver and had a hole punched in the shoulder of his overcoat. It stopped there, however, and did not hurt him in the least. He looked rather astonished, pulled the little stranger from the hole it had made, looked at it quizzically, and then put it in his pocket and went on watching the French guns. I think he would have been quite justified in stopping the battle and showing his trophy to everybody on both sides.

The King was much interested in all the news from Brussels, how the people were behaving, what the Germans were doing, whether there were crowds on the streets, and how the town felt about the performances of the army.

He realised what has happened to his little country, and made me realise it for the first time. He said that France was having a hard time, but added that perhaps a sixth of her territory was invaded and occupied, but that every bit of his country had been ravaged and devastated with the exception of the little bit by the sea coast and Antwerp itself, which was getting pretty rough treatment, in order to put it in shape to defend itself. He spoke with a great deal of feeling. And no wonder!

Then to change the tone of the conversation, he looked down at my pretty patent leather shoes, and asked in a bantering way whether those were a part of my fighting kit, and where I had got them. I answered: "I got them several months ago to make my first bow to Your Majesty, at Laeken!" He looked around for a bit at the soggy fields, the marching troops, and then down at the steaming manure heap, and remarked with a little quirk to his lips: "We did not think then that we should hold our first good conversation in a place like this, did we?" He smiled in a sad way, but there was a lot more sadness than mirth in what he said.

Guy d'Oultremont came up and said something that I did not understand, and we started back toward the headquarters. We stopped opposite the inn, and the two colonels were called up for a little more talk.

Just then a crowd of priests, with Red Cross brassards on their arms, came down the road on their way to the battlefield to gather up the wounded. With his usual shyness the King withdrew a few steps to seek shelter behind a motor that was standing near by. As we talked, we edged back a little, forcing him to come forward, so that he was in plain sight of the priests, who promptly broke out in a hearty "*Vive le roi!*" He blushed and waved his hand at them, and, after they had passed by, shook hands with us and followed them on foot out onto the field. In modern warfare a King's place is supposed to be in a perfectly safe spot, well back

of the firing line, but he does not play the game that way. Every day since the war began, he has gone straight out into the thick of it, with the shells bursting all around and even within range of hostile rifle fire. It is a dangerous thing for him to do, but it does the troops good, and puts heart into them for the desperate fighting they are called upon to do. They are all splendidly devoted to him.

The rain stopped as we got into the motors and started back toward Malines, with the idea of locating the other battery of *obusiers*. There was a sharp volley of three toots on Colonel DuCane's horn, and we came to a sudden stop, with the emergency brakes on, to receive the information that it was two o'clock and time for lunch. None of us had kept any track of time, and all were ready to go sailing along indefinitely without food. As soon as we had noticed the time, however, we all became instantly hungry, and moved along, looking for a good place for lunch. I had the happy idea of suggesting the convent where we had taken refuge on Thursday, and thither we repaired to be most warmly greeted by all the nuns, and most particularly by the little Irish sister who was overjoyed to see British uniforms and hear some war news that she could believe. She hailed me with, "Oh! and it's the ripsisintitive of the Prisidint?" The nuns gave us a table in the park and two big benches, and we got out our bread and cheese and chocolate and a few other things that Colonel DuCane had found somewhere, and had a most comfortable meal with a towering pitcher of beer brought out from the convent, to give us valour for the afternoon's work.

After lunch we went back through Malines again, through the railroad yards, bumping over the tracks, and away toward Muysen and Rymenam to see the other batteries. I was struck in going through the railway yards, which I had always seen teeming with activity and movement, to see that all the rails are covered deep with rust---probably for the first time. Think of it !

After leaving Muysen, our road lay for a mile or so along a canal with open fields on either side. Uhlan patrols had been reported in this part of the country, which was in a weak spot in the Belgian lines, and the Colonel told the staff officer to keep a sharp lookout and be ready with his revolver and prepared for a burst of speed. That military genius replied with an air of assurance: "Oh, that's all right. They cannot cross the canal." The Colonel confined himself to saying mildly: " No, but bullets can! " Little Napoleon said nothing more, but I noticed that he unstrapped his revolver without loss of time.

We. were bowling along the road, looking for the battery, when there was the most enormous noise which tore the earth asunder and the universe trembled. I looked around to the left, and there not more than a hundred feet away were those three husky French guns which had just gone off right over our heads! We had found them all right, but I should prefer to find them in some other way next time.

We spent a little time looking at them, and Ferguson had them get out some of the explosive and show it to me. It comes in long strips that look for all the world like chewing gum-the strips about the same proportions, only longer. I fail to see, however, how they can be made to blow up.



The Hôtel de Ville,
Louvain



Belgian War Medals

After a bit we got back into the cars, and started out to cruise around to the Belgian left wing and watch a little of the infantry fighting at close quarters. We very soon began running into stragglers who informed us that the ----th Division was being driven back, and that a retreat was in progress. Soon we came upon supply trains and ammunition wagons making for the rear, to be out of the way of the troops when they began to move. We were not anxious to be tangled up in the midst of a retreat, and obliged to spend the night trying to work our way out of it, so we forged ahead and got back to Lierre as fast as we could. It was raining hard as we came in, and we took refuge in the Hôtel de Ville, where the colonels read their telegrams and got off a report to London. One of their telegrams brought the unwelcome news that Ferguson was also recalled to England. They are evidently hard put to it to find enough officers to handle the volunteer forces. He will have to stay on for a few days, but Colonel DuCane came back with us and left the next morning for England by way of Ostend.

When we got back to the hotel after a fast run, I found that Inglebleek, the King's Secretary, had been around twice for me, and wanted me to go at once to the Palace. I jumped into the car and ran over there, to learn that the Queen wanted to see me. She was then at dinner, and he thought it would do the next time I came up--she seems to have wanted more news of Brussels---nothing pressing. She had told Inglebleek to give me a set of the pictures she had had taken of the damage done to the Cathedral at Malines. They are interesting as a matter of record.

Sir Francis had another good bulletin from the War Office, and was beaming. The colleagues came and gathered round the table, and chortled with satisfaction.

Heavy cannonading continued well into the night, to cover the advance of the ---th Division, which had been reinforced and was moving back into the dark and rain to take up its old position and be ready for the Germans in the morning.

I was up and about early on Sunday morning. Had breakfast with Count Goblet d'Alviella, one of the Ministers of State. Gathered up Monsieur de Woeste and Faura, and made for the Scheldt and Brussels. Instead of going across on the boat as we had to do the last time, we found a broad and comfortable pontoon bridge placed on canal boats and schooners lashed together and moored from one side of the river to the other. Any time they like, the Belgians can cut the string, and there is no way of getting into the city from that side. There was a tremendous wind blowing and the rain fell in torrents---short showers---from the time we left Antwerp until we came sailing into town here.

The bridge at Termonde had been blown up by the Germans on evacuating the place after having destroyed the entire town, so there was no thought of returning that way. I knew there could be nothing doing the direct way through Malines, so decided on a long swing around the circle by way of Ghent as the only practicable way. We found Belgian troops all the way to Ghent, and had no trouble beyond giving the password which I had. We drew up at a restaurant in a downpour and had a hasty lunch, getting under way again immediately afterward.

About ten kilometers this side of Ghent we came to Melle, a village which had been destroyed, and another where a number of houses had been burned. A nice-looking young chap told us that there had been a fight there the day before and that the Germans had set fire to the place as they retreated---just from cussedness, so far as he could see. There, and at another place along the road, peasants told us that they had been made to march in front of the German troops when they marched against

the Belgians. I don't like to believe that there is any truth in that story but it comes from every direction and the people tell it in a most convincing way.

We found no Germans until we were this side of Assche and then our adventures were evidently at an end. As we came in we could hear heavy cannonading and Hofstade and knew that the fight was still going on. They had been hearing it in town for a couple of days.

The family at the Legation had been somewhat anxious, but had learned through the Germans that we were all right--evidently from somebody who got through the lines. I had to sit right down and tell the story of my life from one end to the other.

I never got over the idea in Antwerp of the incongruity of going out onto the field all day and fighting a big battle, or rather, watching it fought, and then sailing comfortably home to a big modern hotel in a motor and dressing for dinner. I don't think there has ever been a war quite like this before.

Herwarth has gone to the front for some active service. I am sorry to miss him. He went up to Hofstade the day I was to have returned, and waited for me about an hour, but the fire got too thick for him and he came back and reported that I would not be able to get through.

Monsieur de Woeste called this afternoon and paid his respects. He gave the Minister an account of the attempts we made to get through that made his hair stand on end for an hour afterward.

Footnote

3. Former American Minister at The Hague.

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/19140909%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140910%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140911%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140804-19140911%20PAYRO%20EPISODIOS%20OCUPACION%20ALEMANA.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140912%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140913%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf>

French version :

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140909%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO%20FR.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140910%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO%20FR.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140911%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO%20FR.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140804-19140911%20PAYRO%20EPISODIOS%20OCUPACION%20ALEMANA%20FR.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140912%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO%20FR.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140913%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO%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