

On board S. S. "Oranje Nassau." off Flushing, Sept. 30, 1914.---We got away on Sunday morning about eleven o'clock, after many calls at headquarters and a mild row about the *laisser-passer* that had not been sent. It was finally discovered that some bone-headed clerk had sent it by mail---a matter of three days! It was fished out of the military post office, and we got away in a few minutes.

We were in the big car, heavily laden-two trunks, several valises and a mail pouch on top-my two passengers inside with their small stuff, the chauffeur and I in front.

We made quick time out through Tervueren and down to Namur, hearing the heavy booming of cannon all the time away to the north. Ruin was all the way---odd farm-houses burned, towns with half the buildings in them, the Grand Place destroyed, etc. The great square at Namur a heap of brick and mortar.

The great bridge across the Meuse was dynamited, and the three sections hung in the river. All the way to Liège the main bridges had been destroyed, and we had to cross on temporary affairs constructed by the Germans.

And the Germans were thick all the way, holding us up at frequent intervals to look at our papers. They have it in for Belgium, and are in bad humour. We had some fine samples of it during the day.

We stopped not far from Huy for a picnic lunch, and then got under way again, being stopped frequently all the way to Liège, where we sought out the Consulate. The Consul had gone to Spa to look after some English people, but I said my few words to his wife and daughter, and then hurried away toward Visé and the Dutch frontier.

Visé n'existe plus! Goodness knows what was done to the place, but there is nothing left but blackened walls. It took us a long time to find unencumbered roads and get through between the fallen walls. Not far from the edge of town we found the last German outpost, and were promptly put under arrest because my *laisser-passer* did not bear my photograph. The officer in command cursed me roundly for daring to come through Liège without reporting, placed two armed soldiers in the car, and ordered us sent back. It was futile to point out to him that passes issued by the Military Governor General did not need to conform to the local rules; in fact, it only made him peevish. We scorched back over the road to Liège, but I succeeded in making the soldiers stop at a small town where there was a local headquarters of some sort with a colonel in command. I got him to look at our pass which had been confiscated by our guard, and, after hearing my case and thinking heavily, he unenthusiastically said we might proceed. We went back through Visé even faster, and enjoyed the look of our lieutenant when told he had been overruled. After a minute or so he became very affable and said he had a brother in Jefferson City, Mo., and a nephew in Sacramento, *Californien*, who runs an *Apoteke*. Just to show there was no hard feeling, I gave him a cigar, and a few minutes later we crossed the Dutch frontier, where we created a sensation. A big crowd gathered around the car, and, by the time the leisurely custom officers had examined the papers given me by the Dutch Legation, they were packed so tight that it took the united effort of several officers and citizens to get us extricated.

Holland is taking no chances, and has quantities of troops massed in that part of the country. There are frequent posts to stop travellers and examine papers, and there is practically no traffic on the road save that of a military character.

Near Maestricht, we ran into a large detachment guarding a bridge. Our papers did not satisfy the commanding officer, so we were once more placed under arrest and

hustled through town to headquarters. The officers there were very courteous, and, after examining my papers, made out a *laisser-passer* for use in Holland and sent me on my way.

By this time it was dark, but we determined to push on as far as Roermond---50 kilometers. Here we found a charming little hotel---the Lion d'Or---and after a good supper, got early to bed.

The next day I planned to take the two ladies---who have good nerve, and don't turn a hair at being arrested---to Rotterdam and then run down to Antwerp, some 280 kilometers, a long run in war time.

We were off at 6:30, and bowled along beautifully in a bitter cold wind until we were in sight of Tilburg, where the engine broke down. Eugène, the chauffeur, tried everything he could think of, and tore his hair in rage and shame. Finally we got a soldier on a bicycle to go into Tilburg and get a motor to tow us in. Then two good hours in a garage before we were in shape to start.

We caught the boat at Moerdyk and got into Rotterdam a little before four. I installed my companions at the Maas Hotel, overlooking the same old Meuse, and then started back through the rain toward Antwerp. At Willemsdorp we just missed the boat for Moerdyk and lost an hour. Eugène raged and smoked many cigarettes, to the danger of his health, because his *sacrée machine* had lost us so much time.

At eight we got to Rosendaal, near the Belgian frontier, and were forbidden to go any farther until morning, as the outposts were taking no chances.

Had a good supper at the little hotel, had my papers viséed by the Belgian Consul, and at 6 o'clock yesterday morning was up and away, by way of Putte.

The Belgian outposts received us with levelled rifles, but when we got near, one of the officers recognised me through his glasses, and we got through without any more trouble. Arrived at the St. Antoine as everybody was coming down to breakfast. The Germans were bombarding the outer forts, and they could not believe their eyes when I came in. Not a word of news had got through the lines for some days, and I was nearly torn to pieces by the excited friends.

I had coffee with Colonel Fairholme, and got all the news he could tell me. Malines has been bombarded again, and Antwerp is filled with refugees. Before I left, the Germans had occupied Malines itself and were bombarding the fort at Waelhem.

After breakfast I started out on my carefully planned campaign. First to the Consulate-General to get off some telegrams, etc. Then to the Foreign Office with a lot of things to attend to. I was able to give van der Elst word that his son is in Magdebourg---a prisoner, but not wounded. The look on his face when he got the news paid for the whole trip. I saw M. Davignon, and went with him to see the Prime Minister, who had heard I was there and had sent for me.

On the way we saw hundreds of miserable refugees from Malines pouring down from the station. The courage of these Belgians is beyond all words. Save for the two in the freight station yard at Louvain, I have not seen a woman crying! It may be that they are numb, but they have none of the stupidity of numbness. And when you think that these very women will be creeping back to their homes and caring for the German wounded they find there, it gives you a fine lump in the throat.

I paid a call at the French Legation, went back to the Consulate-General to sign my telegrams and mail which had been hammered out, and then to lunch. Got away at 3:30 to the banging of heavy siege artillery and invitations to come back "if we are still here ." As I was getting into the car, Prince D----- plucked me by the sleeve and

pointed at the Cathedral tower high above us. "Take a good look," he said. "It may not be here when you come back."

We made good time through the rain, but missed the boat at Moerdyck, and spent an hour on the dock. Got in at ten, ravenously hungry, had a snack, and then to bed.

Up again at six and took the seven-thirty train for Flushing. It loafed along through the country, and we did not sail until eleven. We have to go round to Folkstone, but hope to be in by six o'clock.

There are not more than twenty people on the ship, and the way they went through our credentials was a caution. I was glad I had taken the precaution to provide myself with American, British, German, Dutch and Belgian papers for the trip. There is another examination at Folkstone.

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://idesetautres.be/upload/191411-12%20PAYRO%20MONSIEUR%20DAGIMONT%20CORR%20EO%20SOLDADITO%20BELGA.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140928%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140929%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140930%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf>

French version :

<http://idesetautres.be/upload/191411-12%20PAYRO%20MONSIEUR%20DAGIMONT%20CORR%20EO%20SOLDADITO%20BELGA%20FR.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140928%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO%20FR.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140929%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO%20FR.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19140930%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