

On board S.S. "Princess Juliana," off Dover, Sunday, October 19, 1914.- Here we are again, coming into England in rain and fog. Up to the last minute, I was in great doubt as to whether we should come at all, but everything was finally straightened out and here we are.

Friday we spent in hard work, aggravated with many conferences. In the morning most of the German civil and military Government came to the Legation and discussed the food question with the members of the Committee, the Spanish Minister and ourselves. They all united in asking that I go to London and lay the situation before the Belgian Minister, the Spanish and American Ambassadors and, under their chaperonage, before the British Government. When this had been agreed to, some bright soul suggested that I be accompanied by a commission of fifteen prominent Belgians, to add impressiveness to what I had to say. The two Ministers rose up and said *no*, adding that as I was to do the work, and bear the responsibility in going on this mission of forlorn hope, I should not be hampered by having to carry the weight of fifteen speech makers. That was knocked in the head, and then to show that we were not unreasonable, we asked that two members of the Committee go along. The men chosen were Baron Lambert and Monsieur Francqui, one of the leading bankers. of Brussels and a man of poise and judgment. They expressed reluctance but were soon persuaded.

This morning, during a call at the Political Department, the talk turned on Mexico. I was asked what the President was driving at, and answered that he was clearly trying to give the Mexicans every opportunity to solve their own troubles without interference. I was then asked, rather slyly, whether the President really wanted them to settle their troubles. Without waiting to hear my answer, the oracle went on to tell me what our real policy was as he saw it, and he had no doubts. The President wanted to take Mexico, but was intelligent enough to realise that if he

simply seized it, he would forfeit any claim he might have to disinterestedness, and our Anglo-Saxon hypocrisy could not swallow that. Therefore, he was deliberately allowing the Mexicans to drift into a hopeless condition of anarchy, which he knew would get steadily worse, until all the best and most prosperous elements in the country would come to the conclusion that they would be happier and safer under American rule than under the uncertain despotism of changing factions. The President could then yield to their entreaties, and could take over the government of Mexico as a humanitarian service to the people.

I made a feeble attempt to explain what our real feelings were toward Mexico, but it soon became evident that we could not think in the same terms, so I gave up. There was no criticism expressed or implied. On the contrary, there was evidence of real admiration of the President's technique.

The rest of the day was spent in getting ready letters and telegrams and other papers necessary in our work.

Fowler and I dined at the Lambert's, finished up our work at the Legation, and got to bed at midnight. We got up yesterday morning at half-past three, and at half-past four set sail in three motors---one filled with servants and mountains of small baggage.

We sped in the dark through ruined villages to Antwerp, and from there to Esschen on the Dutch frontier, which we reached soon after daylight. We had papers from the Dutch Legation, calling upon the customs authorities to let us pass, but a chuckle-headed *douanier* would not even read our papers, and held us up for an hour, while he made out papers of various sorts and collected a deposit on our cars. I expostulated in vain, and shall have to get my comfort from making a row later. As a consequence of his cussedness, we missed the morning boat train to Flushing,

and had to spend the day in that charming city. We found the place filled with refugees from all parts of Belgium, and were greeted on every hand by people we knew. The hotels were filled to overflowing, and people were living in freight cars, sheds and on the sidewalk. We clung to chairs in the reading room at one of the hotels, and walked the streets until nine o'clock, when we got aboard the boat with eight hundred other people. Cabins were not to be had for love or money, but Francqui, by judicious corruption, got us a place to sleep, and we slept hard, despite the noise, which was tremendous.

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/19141015%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141016%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141017%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141018%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141019%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf>

French version :

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141015%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO%20FR.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141016%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO%20FR.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141017%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO%20FR.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141018%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO%20FR.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141019%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%20guerre_de_Paul_Max_bdef.pdf