

Brussels, November 5th, 1914. - We were met in Flushing by our Consular Agent, who put us through the customs and onto the train.

No motor was waiting for us at Rosendaal, and we had a hard time getting shelter for the night. Finally we succeeded in getting a room for the two women in a little, third-rate hotel, and Jack and I slept on the floor of a sitting-room in the little Hôtel Central. I was so dog-tired that I slept like a log, wrapped up in my fur coat.

While we were having coffee, M. de Leval came up in my little car. He had been to Rotterdam in connection with the first shipment of food, and thought he would find me alone. He had bought a lot of gasoline in Breda, to be called for, so we could take no luggage. We found another car leaving for Brussels at noon, and loaded it up with Countess N.,-----Jack and the luggage, while M. de L. and I took A. B. and the mail bags, and started by way of Breda. We came through Aerschot and stopped for a stretch and to look about.

We walked about the streets for a time, and stopped in a shop to ask for a drink of water. After giving it to us, the proprietor asked if we would like to see the state the Germans had left things in. He led us back into his living quarters, opened a door bearing an inscription to the effect that it was an officers' mess, and let us in. I never have seen a more complete mess. Everything in the place was smashed, and the whole room was filthy. The officers had left only a few days before and had taken pains to break everything before they went. Obscene remarks were chalked on the walls, and the pictures were improved with heavy attempts at fun. I always used to think that the term "officer and gentleman" was redundant, but now I begin to understand the need for it.



An improvised pass,
written on the back of a
wine card, to enable Mr.
Gibson to pass through the
streets after dark on his
way to German
headquarters at Liège



General Baron von
Bissing, Governor-General
in Belgium

The church was also in a bad state. The doors have nearly all been battered down. The wooden Gothic statues in the nave have been smashed or destroyed by fire. The altars and confessionals were wantonly destroyed. The collection boxes had been pried open and emptied. We were told that the holy-water font and the vestments of the priests had been profaned and befouled. It is not a pretty sight.

Aerschot was partially destroyed on August 19th and 20th. The Germans claim that their commanding officer was shot by the son of the Burgomaster. The Belgians claim that he was struck by a stray bullet fired at random by one of his own men in the marketplace. However that may be, the whole place was instantly in an uproar, and quiet was not restored until the town a been sacked and over one hundred and fifty people killed, among them women and children. The Burgomaster and his son and a priest were among those shot and buried outside the Louvain gate. One of those taken to the place of execution was spared on condition that he should go to Louvain to tell of what had happened.

Louvain has been cleaned up a lot, and we stopped there only long enough to have our passes examined at Headquarters, getting back a little before six to a warm welcome.

The other motor was due at six, but did not come, and after waiting up till midnight, I turned in. Jack bobbed up yesterday at noon. The car had been stopped at the frontier because several of the passengers had not proper papers. Jack threw out his chest and insisted on being taken to Antwerp to see the Military Governor. His passport, as bearer of despatches, did the business, and they were allowed to proceed under armed guard. They were kept overnight in the Hôtel Webber, and then Jack and Mine. N----- were allowed to come on to Brussels in the car, while the others were detained.

Marshal Langhorne came in to-day from The Hague to effect formal delivery of the first bargeload of food, and had weird tales to tell of his adventures by the way. Thank goodness, the first of the food has arrived in time, and if the flow can be kept up, the worst of our troubles will be averted.

With this first consignment of food came the story of how it was got through in such record time. Hoover is one of these people who is inclined to get things done and attend later to such details as getting formal permission, etc.

With Shaler's forty thousand pounds and promises of five hundred- thousand dollars more, he went to work and placed orders for twenty thousand tons of food, costing two million dollars a week. This he did on the theory that money would come along later, when the need was realised, but that the Belgian stomachs would not wait until collections had been made. He purchased the food, got it transported to the docks, and loaded on vessels that he had contrived to charter, while all the world was fighting for tonnage, got them loaded and the hatches closed.

When everything was ready, Hoover went to the proper authority and asked for permission to ship the food, announcing that unless he could get four shiploads of food into Belgium by the end of the week, the people would begin to starve. The functionary was sympathetic, but regretted that in the circumstances, he could not help. It was out of the question to purchase food. The railways were choked with troops, munitions and supplies. Ships were not to be had for love or money. And above all, the Channel was closed to commerce.

Hoover heard him patiently to the end.

"I have attended to all this," he said. "The ships are already loaded and ready to sail. All I need from you is clearance papers. You can let me have them, and everything will be all right."

The high official could hardly believe his ears:

"Young man," he gasped, "perhaps you don't realise what you have done. Men have been sent to the Tower for less. If it were for any other cause, I hesitate to think what would happen to you. But as it is, I can only congratulate you on some very good work."

And that's how we got our food in time.

Fines are being imposed on towns on one pretext or another. The other day two policemen got into a controversy with a German secret-service agent who did not explain who he was, and got a good thumping for doing various things that a civilian had no business to do. This morning von Lüttwitz comes out with this proclamation :

On the 28th of October, 1914, a legally constituted court martial pronounced the following sentences:

(1) The policeman De Ryckere for having attacked, in the legal exercise of his duties, an authorised agent of the German Government, for having deliberately inflicted bodily hurt in two instances with the aid of other persons, for having aided in the escape of a prisoner and for having attacked a German soldier, was condemned to five years' imprisonment.

(2) The policeman Seghers for having attacked, in the exercise of his legal duties, an authorised agent of the German Government, for having deliberately inflicted bodily hurt on this German agent, and for having aided the escape of a prisoner (all these offences constituting one charge), was condemned to three years' imprisonment.

The sentences were confirmed on October 31st by the Governor-General, Baron von der Goltz.

The city of Brussels, not including its suburbs, has been punished for the injury by its policeman De Ryckere to a German soldier, by an additional fine of Five Million Francs.

The Governor of Brussels,
BARON VON LÜTTWITZ,
General.

Brussels, November 1, 1914.

Last night we dined at Ctesse. N-----'s to celebrate everybody's safe return.

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/19141103%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141104%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141105%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf>

French version :

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141103%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO%20FR.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141104%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO%20FR.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141105%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