

**Brussels, Sunday, December 6, 1914.**---We got away at eight o'clock on Thursday morning, in three cars from the Palace Hotel. We were four cars when we started, but fifty feet from the door the leading car broke down and could not be started, so we rearranged ourselves and left the wreck behind. The party was composed of the three Rockefeller representatives, Dr. Rose, Mr. Bicknell, and Henry James, Jr., Monsieur Francqui, Josse Allard, Jack and I.

It was rainy and cold, but we made good time to Louvain and stopped at the Hotel de Ville. Professor Neerinx, of the University, took up the duties of Burgomaster when the Germans shipped the real one away. He speaks perfect English, and led the crowd around the town with the rush and energy of a Cook's tourist agent. He took us first through the Cathedral, and showed us in detail things that we could not have seen if we had gone at it alone. Then around to the library and some of the other sights of particular interest, and finally for a spin through the city, to see the damage to the residence district. This was a most interesting beginning, and made a good deal of an impression on our people. They asked questions about the work being done by the people toward cleaning up the ruins of the town and trying to arrange makeshift shelters to live in during the winter. The Mayor is a man of real force of character, and has accomplished marvels under the greatest difficulties.

From Louvain we cut away to the northeast to Aerschot. where we took a quick look at the welter of ruin and struck out to the west through Diest and Haelen, which I saw on my first trip with Frederick Palmer before there was anything done to them.

We got to Liège about one o'clock and had lunch in a restaurant downtown, where we were joined by Jackson, our delegate sent down there to supervise the distribution of food for the Commission. He told us a lot about the difficulties and

incidents of his work, and some details of which we had to think. He is the first delegate we have sent to outlying cities, and is up on his toes with interest. A lot more have already sailed from New York, and will soon be here. They are to be spread all over the country in the principal centres, some to stay in the big cities and watch local conditions, and others to travel about their districts and keep track of the needs of the different villages. It is all working out a lot better than we had hoped for, and we have good reason to be pleased. Our chief annoyance is that every time things get into a comfortable state, some idiot starts the story either in England or America that the Germans have begun to seize foodstuffs consigned to us. Then we have to issue statements and get off telegrams, and get renewed assurances from the German authorities and make ourselves a general nuisance to everybody concerned. If we can choke off such idiots, our work will be a lot easier.

The Burgomaster came into the restaurant to find us, and offered to go on with us to Visé, to show us the town, and we were glad to have him, as he knows the place like the palm of his hand.

I had been through Visé twice, and had marvelled at the completeness of the destruction, but had really had no idea of what it was. It was a town of about forty-five hundred souls, built on the side of a pretty hill overlooking the Meuse. There are only two or three houses left. We saw one old man, two children and a cat in the place. Where the others are, nobody knows. The old man was well over sixty, and had that afternoon been put off a train from Germany, where he had been as a prisoner of war since the middle of August. He had KRIEGSGEFANGENER MUNSTER stencilled on his coat, front and back, so that there could be no doubt as to who he was. He was standing in the street with the tears rolling down his cheeks and did not know where to go; he had spent the day wandering about the neighbouring villages trying to find news of his wife, and had just learned that she

had died a month or more ago. It was getting dark, and to see this poor old chap standing in the midst of this welter of ruin without a chick or child or place to lay his head.... It caught our companions hard, and they loaded the old man up with bank-notes, which was about all that anybody could do for him and then we went our way. We wandered through street after street of ruined houses, sometimes whole blocks together where there were not enough walls left to make even temporary shelters.

Near the station we were shown a shallow grave dug just in front of a house. We were told who filled the grave---an old chap of over sixty. He had been made to dig his own grave, and then was tied to a young tree and shot. The bullets cut the tree in two just a little above the height of his waist, and the low wall behind was full of bullet holes.

As nearly as we can learn, the Germans appear to have come through the town on their way toward Liège. Nothing was supposed to have happened then, but on the 15th, 16th and 17th, troops came back from Liège and systematically reduced the place to ruins and dispersed the population. It was clear that the fires were all set, and there were no evidence of street fighting. It is said that some two hundred civilians were shot, and seven hundred men bundled aboard trains and sent back to Germany as prisoners of war---harmless people like the old chap we saw.



Von Bulow's greeting to the people of Liège

## Translation.

### ORDER TO THE POPULATION OF LIÈGE

The population of Andenne, after manifesting peaceful intentions toward our troops, attacked them in the most treacherous manner. With my authorization the general who commanded these troops has reduced the town to ashes and has shot 110 persons.

I bring this fact to the knowledge of the City of Liège so that its people may understand the fate which awaits them if they assume a like attitude.



How the simple pleasures of the German soldier were restricted

Translation:

**THIS HOUSE  
IS TO  
BE  
PROTECTED**

It is strictly  
forbidden to enter  
houses or set them  
on fire without the  
permission of the  
Kommandantur

The Burgomaster set out on foot to walk back three kilometers and catch a tram to Liège, and we went southeast to Dalhem. where we spent the night at the Château de Dalhem, on a hill overlooking the picturesque little village snuggled in the bottom of the valley. It was off the main line of march, and had not suffered. The chateau belongs to General Thyss. who was a great friend of the late King Leopold. He was not there, but the place was being protected by a splendid old dragon in the shape of a German governess who had been with the family for over thirty years, and refused to leave when the war broke out. She had been obliged to lodge a crowd of German officers and some of their men, but held them down with an iron hand, kept them from doing any damage and made them pay for every egg and every bottle of wine they had. We arrived after dark and threw the place into a panic of fear, but Monsieur Francqui soon reassured everybody, and the place was lighted up and placed at our disposal in short order.

Although it was pitch-dark when we arrived, it was only half-past four and we set out on foot to stretch a little. The moon came out and lighted our way through the

country roads. We tramped for a couple of hours through all sorts of little towns and villages and groups of houses, some of them wiped out and some hardly touched.

General Thyss's cellars are famous, and with our dinner of soup and bacon and eggs, we had some of the finest Burgundy I have ever tasted. Early to bed so that we could be up and off at daybreak.

Friday morning we were away early, and made for Herve, where I had never been before. It is a ruin with a few natives and a lot of Landsturm left. We talked to some peasants and to an old priest who gave us something to think about in their stories of happenings there during and after the occupation of their homes. From there to Liège, by way of a lot of little villages whose names I don't remember, but whose condition was pretty bad, past the fort of Fléron and the defensive works that are being put up there.

Wasted some time trying to get gasoline for the other motors, and then the long stretch to Namur, down the valley of the Meuse, and stopped long enough for a look at Andennes, my second visit to the place.

In Andenne and Seilles (a little village across the Meuse) the Germans did a thorough job. They killed about three hundred people and burned about the same number of houses. Most of the houses had been looted systematically. According to the stories of those inhabitants who remain, there was a reign of terror for about a week, during which the Germans rendered themselves guilty of every sort of atrocity and barbarity. They are all most positive that there was no firing upon the German troops by the civil population. It seems to be generally believed that the massacre was due to resistance of retiring Belgian troops and the destruction of bridges and tunnels to cover their retreat. Whatever the provocation, the behaviour of the Germans was that of savages. We were shown photographs showing the

corpses of some of those killed. It was to be inferred that they had been wantonly mutilated.

Had lunch at an hotel across the street from the station. After a hasty lunch we made off to Dinant, still following the Meuse. The thin line of houses down the course of the river were thinner than they were a few months ago, and there were signs of suffering and distress everywhere. I had never been to Dinant before, but had seen pictures of it and thought I had an idea of what we were going to see. But the pictures did not give a hint of the horror of the place. The little town, which must have been a gem, nestled at the foot of a huge gray cliff, crowned with the obsolete fort, which was not used or attacked. The town is *gone*. Part of the church is standing, and the walls of a number of buildings, but for the most part, there is nothing but a mess of scattered bricks to show where the houses had stood. And why it was done, we were not able to learn, for everybody there says that there was no fighting in the town itself. We heard stories, too, and such stories that they can hardly be put on paper. Our three guests were more and more impressed as we went on. The bridge was blown up and had fallen into the river, and as we had little time to make the rest of our day's journey, we did not wait to cross by the emergency bridge farther up the river. While we were standing talking to a schoolmaster and his father by the destroyed bridge, seven big huskies with rifles and fixed bayonets came through, leading an old man and a woman who had been found with a camera in their possession. At first there was no objection raised to the taking of photographs, but now our friends are getting a little touchy about it, and lock up anybody silly enough to get caught with kodaks or cameras.

According to what we were told, the Germans entered the town from the direction of Ciney, on the evening of August 21st, and began firing into the windows of the houses. The Germans admit this, but say that there were French troops in the town

and this was the only way they could get them out. A few people were killed, but there was nothing that evening in the nature of a general massacre. Although the next day was comparatively quiet, a good part of the population took refuge in the surrounding hills.

On Sunday morning, the 23rd, the German troops set out to pillage and shoot. They drove the people into the street, and set fire to their houses. Those who tried to run away were shot down in their tracks. The congregation was taken from the church, and fifty of the men were shot. All the civilians who could be rounded up were driven into the big square and kept there until evening. About six o'clock the women were lined up on one side of the square and kept in line by soldiers. On the other side, the men were lined up along a wall, in two rows, the first kneeling. Then, under command of an officer, two volleys were fired into them. The dead and wounded were left together until the Germans got round to burying them, when practically all were dead. This was only one of several wholesale executions. The Germans do not seem to contradict the essential facts, but merely put forward the plea that most of the damage was incidental to the fighting which took place between the armed forces. Altogether more than eight hundred people were killed. Six hundred and twelve have been identified and given burial. Others were not recognisable. I have one of the lists which are still to be had, although the Germans have ordered all copies returned to them. Those killed ranged in age from Félix Fivet, aged three weeks, to an old woman named Jadot, who was eighty. But then Félix probably fired on the German troops.





### Translation:

#### TO THE INHABITANTS OF BELGIUM

Field-Marshal von der Goltz announces to the Belgian population that he is informed by the Generals commanding the troops occupying French territory that cholera is raging fiercely among the allied troops and that there is the greatest danger in crossing the lines or entering enemy territory.

We call upon the Belgian population not to infringe this notice.

Those who do not  
comply with this notice  
will be brought before  
the Imperial Officers of  
Justice and we warn  
that the penalty of death  
may be inflicted upon  
them.

There is no end to the stories of individual atrocities. One is that Monsieur Wasseige, director of one of the banks, was seized by the Germans, who demanded that he should open the safes. He flatly refused to do this, even under threat of death. Finally he was led with his two eldest sons to the Place d'Armes and placed with more than one hundred others, who were then killed with machine guns. Monsieur Wasseige's three youngest children were brought to the spot by German soldiers, and compelled to witness the murder of their father and two brothers.

From Dinant we struck across country through Phillipeville and some little by-roads to Raneé, where we were expected at the house of G. D-----. He and his wife and their little girl of five had just returned that morning to receive us, but the place was brightly lighted and as completely prepared as though they had been there all the time. It was a lovely old place, and we were soon made comfortable. German officers have occupied it most of the time, and it required a good deal of cleaning and repairing after they left, but fortunately this work had just been completed, and we had a chance to enjoy the place before any more enforced guests appeared. One of the Imperial princelings had been there for one night, and his name was chalked on the door of his room. He had been *très aimable*, and when he left had taken D --- --'s motor with him.

We took a tramp around the town in a biting wind, and looked at some of the houses of our neighbours. Some of them were almost wrecked after having served as quarters for troops for varying periods. From others all the furniture had been taken away and shipped back to Germany. One man showed us a card which he had found in the frame of one of his best pictures. It was the card of a German officer, and under the name was written an order to send the picture to a certain address in Berlin. The picture was gone, but the frame and card were still there and are being kept against the day of reckoning---if any. We were shown several little safes which had been pried open and looted, and were told the usual set of stories of what had happened when the army went through. Some of the things would be hard to believe if one did not hear them from the lips of people who are reliable and who live in such widely separated parts of the country at a time when communications are almost impossible.

We had a good and ingeniously arranged dinner. All sorts of ordinary foods are not to be had in this part of the country, and our hostess had, by able thinking, arranged a meal which skillfully concealed the things that were lacking. Among other things, I observed that we had a series of most delicious wines---for our host of that evening also had a wonderful cellar. They had told us just before dinner that the Germans had taken an inventory of their wines and had forbidden them to touch another drop, so I wondered whether they were not incurring some risk in order to give us the wine that they considered indispensable. When I asked our hostess, she told me that it was very simple, that all they needed to do was to drink a part of several bottles, refill them partially with water, seal them, and put them back in the cellars; she said scornfully that "*les Boches* don't know one wine from another," and had not yet been able to detect the fraud. They had a lot of cheap champagne in the cellar and had been filling them up with that, as they prefer any champagne to the

best vintage Burgundies. Once in a while there is a little satisfaction reserved for a Belgian.



A Belgian relief ship at Rotterdam



Rotterdam office of the Commission for Relief in Belgium



Barges of the Commission for Relief in Belgium leaving Rotterdam with cargoes of food



We were called at daybreak and were on the road at eight o'clock, taking in a series of small villages which had been destroyed, and talking with the few people to be found about the place. This part of Belgium is far worse than the northern part, where the people can get away with comparative ease to one of the larger towns and come back now and then to look after their crops. Here one village after another is wiped out, and the peasants have no place to go unless they travel so far that there is no hope of returning, perhaps for months together. It will be a great problem to provide shelter for these people so that they can return.

We cut through Beaumont, and then took the main road to Mons, where we arrived in the middle of the morning. On the way we had heard that the English nurses had not yet been released, so I made for the military headquarters and saw the

commandant. It was evident that they had been hauled over the coals for the way they had behaved when Jack was there, for I never saw such politeness in any headquarters. I was preceded by bowing and unctuous soldiers and non-commissioned officers, all the way from the door to the Presence, and was received by the old man standing. He was most solicitous for my comfort and offered me everything but the freedom of the city. He said that he had not received a word of instructions until a few minutes before my arrival, but that he was now able to give the young ladies their liberty and turn them over to me. In order to get them, I was prayed to go over to the headquarters of the military governor of the Province, and an officer was assigned to accompany me. While we were there, the officer who had been so insulting to Jack and to Miss Hozier came into the room, took one look at us, and scuttled for safety. We heard afterward that he had been ordered to apologise for his behaviour.

At the door of the Provincial headquarters I found another car flying the Legation flag, and Monsieur de Leval came charging out into my arms. There had been a pretty hot time about the nurses and he had finally been sent down to get them out. In a few minutes we had them sitting on a bench in the Governor's office, while Kracker, who used to be one of the Secretaries of the German Legation, here, was making out their *laisser-passeurs* to come to Brussels. They were a happy crowd, but pretty well done up by the treatment they had had.

When they were all fixed I went in and asked for the release of Miss Bradford, another English nurse, who had been in prison in Mons and Charleroi for the past five weeks. I learned of her imprisonment almost by accident while we were waiting for the passports. After some argument it was granted, and I went with a soldier to the prison to get her out. I had not expected to find anything very luxurious, but I was shocked when I saw the place. It was the most severe,

repressive penitentiary in the country---still filled with common criminals---and the English nurse was given the same treatment and rations as the worst murderer of the lot. There was the usual row with the man in charge of the place, and finally a soldier was despatched, to tell the young woman she could get ready to go. While she was getting ready, the director of the prison took me around and showed me with great pride things that made me shiver. He said, however, that it was an outrage to put a woman in such a place. The prisoners who do the work of the prison were going about the corridors under guard, each one wearing a dirty brown mask covering his entire head, and with only the smallest of slits for his eyes. They are never allowed to see each other's faces or to speak to one another. I was taken up to the chapel, where each man is herded into a little box like a confessional and locked in so that he cannot see his neighbour, and can only look up toward the raised altar in the centre, where he can see the priest. The school was arranged in the same way, and was shown with equal pride. I fear the jailer thought me lacking in appreciation.

I finally got the young woman out, nearly hysterical, and took her up to the headquarters, and from there to the hotel, where Monsieur de Leval had gathered his charges for luncheon. They were rapidly recovering their old-time spirits, and were chattering away like a lot of magpies.

While I was fussing about with them, I had sent my friends and fellow-travellers ahead, and now left the flock of nurses in the hands of Monsieur de Leval, to be conveyed by tram back to Brussels, while I tried to catch up with my party at the château of Monsieur Warroqué, at Mariemont. I made as much speed as my little car was capable of, but it was nearly two o'clock when I arrived.

The old château of Mariemont is one of those built by Louis XIV, when he set out to have one for each month of the year. This was his place for August. It had been destroyed, and the new one is built near the ruins, but the large park is as it has been for a long time, and a lovely place it is. There were about twenty at table when we arrived, and places were ready for us. More fine wines, and this time to show that we were in the house of a connoisseur, the flunky, in pouring out the precious stuff, would whisper in your ear the name and vintage. Warroqué owns a lot of the coal mines and other properties and is apparently greatly loved by the people. When the Germans came, they seized him as a hostage, but the people became so threatening that he was released. How many men in his position could have counted on that much devotion?

Immediately after luncheon we shoved off and made through the rain for Charleroi, where we took a look at the damage done to the town. It was already dark and we then turned toward Brussels and burned up the road, getting to the Legation at half-past six, to find all the nurses sitting up, having tea with Mrs. Whitlock and the Minister.

### **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/19141128%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141130%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf>

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<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/191412G%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf> (Lieja / Liège)

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/191412H%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf> (Amberes / Antwerp)

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/191412I%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/191412J%20PAYRO%20PEREGRINACION%20A%20LAS%20RUINAS.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/191412%20PAYRO%20NEUTRALIDAD%20BELGICA.pdf>

French version :

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141128%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO%20FR.pdf>

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<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/191412G%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO%20FR.pdf> (Liège / Luik)

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/191412H%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO%20FR.pdf> (Antwerpen / Anvers)

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/191412I%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO%20FR.pdf>

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<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/191412%20PAYRO%20NEUTRALIDAD%20BELGICA%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](http://www.museedelavilledebruxelles.be/fileadmin/user_upload/publications/Fichier_PDF/Fonte/Journal_de%20Oguerre_de_Paul_Max_bdef.pdf)