

**Brussels, December 11, 1914.** --- This afternoon late B----- brought an uncle to see me, to talk about conditions in France between the Belgian frontier and the German lines. Those poor people cannot, of course, get anything from the heart of France, and as the Belgian frontier is closed tight by the Germans, they are already starving. It looks very much as though we should have to extend the scope of our work, so as to look after them, too. We hear very little news from that part of the country, but from what we do hear, conditions must be frightful. In one little town Mr. K----- came through, only twenty out of five hundred houses are said to be standing. He says that the people are not permitted to leave the place and are living in the cellars and ruins in great misery and practically without food.

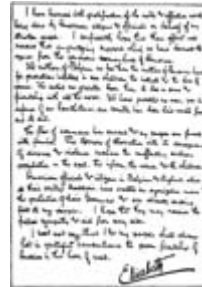
Out of a clear sky comes a new trouble for the country. The German Government has come down with a demand for money on a scale that leaves them speechless. The Belgians are ordered to make a forced payment each month of forty millions of francs, for twelve months. The two first payments are to be made by the 15th of next month, and the subsequent installments on the 10th of succeeding months. It is a staggering total, but the German authorities are deaf to appeals, and the Provinces will have to get together and raise the money in some way.



*La Libre Belgique*, the clandestine paper printed in Brussels in 1915, which survived General von Bissing's reward for the discovery of its office and made fun of him by faking a picture of him reading their condemned paper. (1)



Edward D. Curtis. The, first volunteer worker of the Commission for Relief in Belgium. He served continuously from the autumn of 1914 until the entry of the United States into the war



Appeal of the Queen of the Belgians for help from America

## Footnotes.

1. An entry from a later part of Mr. Gibson's journal gives a picture of the Belgian spirit under German rule and one of the few methods of retaliation they had against German oppression.

The Belgians are getting a good deal of quiet pleasure these days from a clandestine newspaper called *La Libre Belgique* which is published almost in the shadow of the Kommandantur. It is a little four-page paper that is published every now and then--- and says anything it likes about the ---Occupant.--- It also publishes news and texts that are barred from the censored press. It is distributed in a mysterious way that still has the Germans guessing, although they have detailed their cleverest sleuths to the task of hunting down the paper and those responsible for its publication. Every

number is delivered to all the more important German officials in Brussels and, more remarkable still, it appears without fail upon the desk of the Governor-General---in that sanctum guarded like the vaults of the Bank of England. Sometimes it appears in the letter-box in the guise of a letter from Germany; sometimes it is thrown in the window; sometimes it is delivered by an orderly with a bundle of official despatches; sometimes it merely appears from nowhere. But it never fails to reach the Governor-General. He never fails to read it and to wax wroth over its contents. Large rewards have been offered for information about the people who are writing and printing the paper. The Germans rage publicly, which only adds to the pleasure that the Belgians get from their little enterprise.

My copy reaches me regularly and always in some weird way as in the case of the Germans. I don't know who my friend is that sends me the paper. Whoever he is I am much obliged.

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>

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

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

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

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

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

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

<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>

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

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

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

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

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

<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>

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

<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)