

*January 3, 1917.*—Today the Germans publish another decision concerning the rebuilding of the destroyed or ruined towns. It is curious as showing again their mentality, their haste to remove the traces of their work, or to make others do so. At the same time I have an interesting protest from the Burgomaster of Dinant relating to this subject.

Many visitors, Janssen among them, he much concerned about the silly, preposterous letter E. Solvay has written. Now possessed of the odd notion that America should be grateful to Belgium; is certain the Germans will stop the revictualing; wants a commission sent here; wishes to be officially told that America will declare war, and so on. Oh, that with Paul I had the patience any more, as once I seem to have had, to suffer fools gladly.

A woman came in, young, pretty, in tears, in deep mourning, wearing a long crêpe veil that she continually raised and lowered, wishing to send a message to her father, who, she said, is an officer in the Guides, telling him of his father's death. She wept, was hys-

terical and importunate, had known the Ruddocks in Berlin. I wonder if she was a spy? I didn't accept her message, though she insisted on writing it out.

The Allies' reply to the peace overture of Germany is published today;<sup>1</sup> about as weak a document as could be imagined. Neither the German proposal nor the Allies' response rises to any level of statesmanship. The chancelleries of Europe, so far as character is concerned, are bankrupt, and the conceptions of the men in them are no higher than those of the fish-wives down at the Fish Market; they plot and wrangle all the time. The only hope lies in the fact that never, by any accident, do they say what they mean. Side by side with the Allies' response is the note of the Allies to Greece, a note as brutal as the Austrians' ultimatum to Serbia in July of 1914.

<sup>1</sup> As early as December 15, 1916, the Russian Duma had voted to reject the German peace proposals. On December 18th, Premier Briand in the French Chamber advised against their acceptance. Lloyd George made a hostile speech in the House of Commons on December 19th. On December 19th, the Allied Governments dispatched a joint note of refusal, rejecting the German offer as "a sham proposal" and "war manœuvre."