

February 2, 1917.—Still waiting and watching—what next? What will Washington do? No chance as yet to form any opinion. *La Gazette de Holland* for yesterday in by the courier; it is the oldest and the dullest existing newspaper. Some signs in it that England will, as usual, be cocksure and regard the blockade as our rather than their affair. No word yet as to the revictualing, which, as it has so often done, hangs now by a slender thread. I am sorry that I sent my dispatch to the President in the clear. We agreed to do that in our meeting yesterday morning; Villalobar told Ruddock last night he had done so, or was doing so. Today he tells me that he sent it in cipher.

I was at his home this afternoon. He had no news, of course—save that he says that the people now say that the deportations

were contrived by the rich Belgians in combination with the Germans—since no rich are taken. The revolutionary sentiment seems to grow. “The rumor is going over town that there will be no more Kings.” Dr. Fay, who was scraping at my old teeth this morning, said that the Government was to blame for having abandoned the Belgian population, for not having told them the truth, and so on.

Villalobar said that when he was in Paris he heard that when the German peace offer came King Albert was in favor of discussing it. Bertolli, a right-hand man of Briand, went to London, conferred with Lloyd George, and they drew up the bellicose reply practically in its final form. King Albert disapproved. There was a council of state; de Broqueville was of the opinion of His Majesty. Berryer, however, was full of fire and fight. The King said: “We ought to think as Belgians, and not as if Frenchmen.” But, of course, he was powerless before his allies. Villalobar, I fancy, has told all this to von der Lancken.

Villalobar told me also that King Alfonso—Villalobar was in Madrid at this time—when the President’s first note arrived, would have returned another reply; that he supposed that the little secret annex, not for publication, was for him alone; that when he found this same note had been sent to other powers, the same annex, rather, his pride was touched, and he said that he felt that he was entitled to be treated on a better footing than “the Scandinavian combination,” as he contemptuously calls Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. The King had recognized the right of the President, because of his position, to make peace, but had hoped that he might be consulted by the President; that he felt such an act would be very grateful to Spanish pride, as the oldest monarchy, and the first nation on the American continent, and that deliberate attention on the part of the President would bring about a finer feeling in Spain towards America and Americans. I won’t write a dispatch to Washington.

What an appalling spectacle—all this fiendish, diabolic cruelty! One is overwhelmed by the thought of it; such stupendous outlawry that the mind can not grasp it. And war has been pictured by the romanticists as a beautiful, gallant thing! Truly, as old Franz Joseph complained, “There is nothing beautiful about war any more!”

How the President can now avoid a break with Germany is beyond my imagination. It must come, certainly, within the next few days.