

WITH THE EXILED BELGIAN GOVERNMENT

After a brief enjoyment of his freedom in Switzerland and Paris, Whitlock could at last rejoin the government to which he was accredited. Following the fall of Antwerp the Belgian Army had been slowly forced back to the Yser. There King Albert had given orders that the retreat must stop. The dykes at Nieuport were opened, and behind the mile-wide reaches of the Yser the Belgians made their stand. A little triangular segment of his country thus remained to the King, and establishing headquarters at La Panne, he remained there until the close of the war. The Belgian Government and most of the diplomats accredited to it were meanwhile given asylum by the French in the small suburb of Havre called Ste.-Adresse. Along the beach at this suburb the Paris merchant, Dufayel, had established a summer resort, including hotels and villas. The Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs took up its residence in the Villa Louis XVI; most of the diplomatic corps lived in a hotel called l'Hôtellerie.

Whitlock had not a little trouble in making himself at home in this strange place. Havre had ceased to be a French town and become an international city, a weird and wonderful conglomerate. The harbor was still a great French naval station. Through the city itself poured British forces, and all around the town were British cantonments, rest stations, and convalescent camps. Out toward the old town of Harfleur with its reminiscences of Henry V of England was a huge camp of strapping Australian soldiers. Americans in khaki soon began to arrive. Belgian troops were numerous, and Italians, Portuguese, and finally Brazilians were to be seen in numbers. British Indian troops mingled with the Chinese coolies employed in Schneider's munitions works. It is evident that Whitlock found the scene fascinating—though he detested Havre for its filth,

confusion, and constant rain. He quickly established his old relations with the Belgian Cabinet under Premier de Broqueville. He seized the first opportunity for a visit to the King. He made one of the chief friendships of his later life with "good old Nicholson," the British commander in Havre. And once settled with his records about him, he began to write the tale of his experiences in Belgium.