

November 1, 1917.—Went to see de Broqueville, talked of the revictualing in an effort to reach a better understanding; seemed indeed to have succeeded, although de Broqueville is such a good

politician that he always lets one depart with the idea that one has succeeded. Discussed also the question of Belgian orphans, raised in dispatch from Department the other day. His idea was that the work would better be carried on in Switzerland than to undertake the impracticable and terrifying voyage across the sea. We talked also of the decorations for the C.R.B.—they are to be forthcoming soon. I said that Kellogg must have one and de Broqueville agreed.

The affairs in Italy— Oh la! la! la! A perfect *débâcle*! It will either end the war at once or indefinitely prolong it.¹

Bathhurst to Captain Brown:

“I see you scratched your boots with your spurs.”

Brown, bristling up: “Well, I don’t scratch my boots any more than any other officer.”

“But why do you wear them at all? As you are always in an office; do you have to use them on the waste-basket?”

Brown, fuming: “But I ride often.”

“That’s just the trouble; you might hurt your horse.”

Another incident:

Bathhurst (Captain Sir Hervey, eleventh baronet, and so forth, typically English, and very clever) is in charge of docks. Irate Colonel of American regiment, Colonel in long rain coat to his heels, like a shroud, and in round spectacles, very important, with regiment just landed, very irate because Bathhurst told him to go to a certain camp.

Colonel: “Am I not in command here?”

Bathhurst: “Yes, if you can get any one to listen to your commands, but I don’t know who’s going to obey you; I’m sure I’m not.”

Later a young American officer confidentially said to Bathhurst:

“Don’t pay any attention to him, Sir. He thinks he’s God Almighty’s Field Marshal, but he’s only a school teacher at home.”

The fog comes in at the open windows, one can smell it—and the ships in the harbour hoot dismally.

¹ On October 24, 1917, General von Bülow broke through the Italian line at Caporetto, and the defeat quickly became an indescribable rout. For a time it seemed that even Venice would be lost. But by November 10, 1917, the flight was stopped, and the front was reestablished along the Piave.