

November 15, 1917.—The sun—and the Flemish fields around all sweet like spring, though the colours now are all of autumn. And overhead aëroplanes humming—and the thud of the guns. Went alone for a long walk, and loafed about until 3:30 in the afternoon, and then off in a military motor, with an armed adjutant of gendarmes on the box, for the King's. Of late the whole country has been bombed almost constantly by aëroplanes; Dunkirk has been almost destroyed; it is bombarded daily, all the evening we

had talked of it; once 600 men were killed there; the city is almost evacuated of its population, only about 2,000 remain. Yesterday at Adinkerke two women and an officer, in a motor, were killed by an aviator's bomb. Yesterday at La Panne seventeen Guides were killed in the same way. . . . We drove off towards Adinkerke; muddy roads, choked with troops, many French, mostly Belgians, and with long convoy trains—past an aviation camp there in the mud, most desolate; many motor lorries in the ditch. It was dark when we reached the King's; the white, impressive façade of a great farm house, mansion, rather, a country house, looming before us—"The *Moens*" as it is called in Flemish, "The Moors" in English. Guards at the gate.

There was the King again, tall, handsome, strong, hard as nails, ruddy, very simple in khaki. He was glad to see me; it was a fête day, and I felicitated him. We sat down; conversed long in English and in French; that is, he began in English, slid off into French. Asked at once about Colonel House, remembered his visit; "he was accompanied by his secretary, Mr. Clifford Carver"; the King has a wonderful memory! Then he spoke of the telegrams exchanged between himself and the President, hoped all the troubles in the C.R.B. had been settled; hoped Hoover would not desert them nor take too hard little things that men might thoughtlessly say; evidently wished Hoover mollified; he had sent Hoover his portrait, a letter, and so on. (Hoover, though accepting the Legion of Honour, had rather contemptuously rejected the desire of the Belgian Government to decorate him and members of the C.R.B.) and developed again his theme of desiring to secure American friendship. I spoke of the bitter feeling on Vandevyvere's part; he said he would allay it, speak to Vandevyvere—and Vandevyvere just then being announced, he did so, at once, in my presence.

We chatted at length about all sorts of things; the King said that life at La Panne had become untenable; a bomb had fallen even in the yard at "The Moors" the other day; he deprecated the bombing of Bruges by the British, saying the Belgians get it on both sides.

The fourteen Congressmen were late. "Perhaps the British have stolen them from us," the King said. But no, they were announced.

We arose, Vandevyvere and I taking our positions on the King's

left, I ready to present my fellow countrymen. We were all ready; the door opened—and there in the doorway a huddle of men, dressed like farmers ready for corn-husking in the fields—rubber boots, leggings, sweaters, old caps, clothes faded, unbrushed, wrinkled, distinctly old, flannel shirts, and so on, they were all unshaven, uncombed—a sorry lot! They walked at once right up to His Majesty, never halting, never bowing, never waiting for a presentation, the first, a young man, yellow hair, round, smug, Middle West evangelical type, holding out his hand and saying, “How do you do; glad to meet you.” And he introduced the others. I heard such words as Montana, of Washington, of Dakota. One old man held the King’s hand long, pumped it up and down, made a speech; I could just catch snatches, such as—“one who so nobly”—“great shame”—“great honour”—“liberty”—“democracy”—“the world,” and so on.

There was a long table set out for tea, and footmen behind it. The King asked them to have tea—“or wine”—“or are you teetotallers?” he asked. . . . They had heard who I was, crowded about me, all very hearty, good-natured, and flattering. There were two groups, shifting; mine and His Majesty’s. They all wished to hear about the atrocities, and repeated the stories they had heard reflecting on the Belgians, so that I had to go deeply into that, and defend my friends—save those who ran away to England. I had to appeal to de Ceuninck¹ to help me out with figures; de Ceuninck speaks no English, and we spoke French. “What’s that you’re talking,” asked one Congressman, “French, or Belgian?” Another looked the King over and up and down, and when he had finished his inspection, said: “Well, every inch a King, and there’s lot of ’em”—meaning lots of inches. . . . Another said to me: “I reckon you’re mighty homesick. Why don’t you go home?” I told him that I thought this was no time for any one to be away from his post; and besides that I had an ambition—to go back to Brussels with the King. “Well,” he shouted, “we’ll send ’em both back. Shake on that!” And he grasped the hand of the astonished Vandevyvere.

They gathered in a group around the King, and if they didn’t slap him on the back, they might as well have done so, there was no lack of familiarity. And the King enjoyed it; I never saw

¹ Before mentioned as the Belgian Minister of War; stationed not at Havre, of course, but with the King at La Panne.

him so animated, and everybody in his entourage said that he hadn't had so much pleasure in a long time!

They went finally, and the King asked me to stay a moment. We chatted. He said: "They're strong men, used to grappling with problems, with nature's forces." And he asked why McCormick hadn't come. I had to make some explanation that would cover McCormick's boorishness—after insisting twice on being presented, and I had arranged the audience, he calmly wrote me he had changed his mind!—I told His Majesty that he had only been spared a fatigue, that McCormick amounted to nothing—nothing.

"My respects to your wife," he said—and I was off in the dark for the ride back to Sternbourg.

General Millis dined with us at the château this evening. Stories of atrocities all evening.

November 16, 1917.—All ready to start back to Havre with Vandevyvere at 9:20 this morning, when telephone message came from Nell saying that there was a dispatch from London saying Colonel House would be in Paris Monday, that she would motor there today, and meet me at the Meurice this evening. So de Broqueville arranged for a motor to take me on to Paris from Abbeville. Vandevyvere and I drove there; Vandevyvere really most intelligent; explained the Flemish question to me most charmingly; it is all a social question; French being the language of the snobs in Belgium in the minds of the Flemish poor, and so on. We discussed the Flemish question last night, Vandevyvere, de Broqueville, and I... We reached Abbeville, where the car to take me on to Paris was to meet us; lunched at the Tête de Bœuf, typical French provincial hotel, vilely dirty, and on the ragoût they served the largest cockroach I had ever seen, dead—but not a bite could I eat after that. Vandevyvere and I went out and inspected the old church, then the motor came. . . . It was after two when we left, bidding good-bye to Vandevyvere. It was dark long before we reached Beauvais, where we had tea, excellent pâtisserie, and reached Paris at eight o'clock.

November 17, 1917.—Clemenceau is the new premier of France! Newspapers full of it this morning.¹ Shopping all morning, and lunch at Café de Paris. Willards are here from Madrid, left cards

¹ After being in power only two months, the Painlevé Cabinet was overthrown because of its hesitant attitude in dealing with the great public scandals then