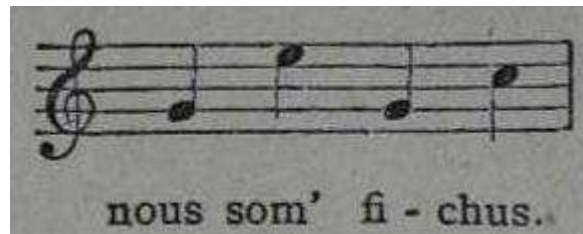


# BELGIUM UNDER THE GERMAN OCCUPATION.

## A PERSONAL NARRATIVE 1

### Chapter XXXV. von der GOLTZ *pasha*.

AUGUST, that terrible August, passed away in the flood of its beautiful sunshine, and its days of blue and gold gradually merged into the silvery light of September. It seemed like mockery to the heavy hearts in Belgium ; the customary rains would have been more in harmony with the general spirit. The Belgians, proud as they were of the resistance of their army, which had fallen back within the fortifications of Antwerp, were depressed and humiliated by the daily spectacle of German troops in their city, of German proclamations on their walls. The soldiers were everywhere, trudging by in those uncouth, heavy boots into which their trousers were so clumsily thrust. Huge motors would sweep by flying the imperial standard, their sirens sounding that call to which Brussels wit soon set mocking, ribald words :



There were processions of great autobuses heavily loaded with baggage — buses that but a month before had been bowling up and down Unter den Linden. The hotels were turned over to German officers ; in the dining-room of the Palace Hotel they were eating and drinking every evening. The army was evidently moving up to the siege of Antwerp. We heard of a wonderful new cannon ; Poussette had seen it down at Namur — a siege-gun, with two powerful motors to draw it, so enormous that it required a base of reinforced concrete on which to mount it. Poussette said it would make the defences of Antwerp wholly useless. He told us about it one afternoon there in the hallway of the Legation, and, wishing to give some idea of the monster's length, he glanced down the hall to the other end and then on out into the sunlit courtyard. The glass door had the effect of arresting his measuring gaze.

"Would you like to have the door opened ?" I asked.

It was the first account we had of the "*Glorioso*", the "*Big Bertha*", the famous *Quarante-deux*. Some claimed to have seen such monsters going down the boulevards manned by soldiers in strange uniforms and curious caps, but they may have been the guns borrowed from the Austrians.

There were long trains of army wagons, like our old prairie-schooners, methodically alined in the order of their serial numbers, lurching along the boulevards where but a few weeks before there had been such a gay parade of wealth and fashion. In the evening we would often hear a noise like rain sweeping nearer and nearer, gradually identifying itself as the drumming of heavy iron-shod boots on the stone paving of the Rue Belliard ; we would hurry to the balcony, and there in the gloom would be those grey soldiers, bowed wearily under their knapsacks, looking like *die Niebelungen*,

hundreds of them, marching four abreast in the darkness, on their mad mission. And now and then in the morning we would be awakened by the same sound, rising into a crescendo of thunder, and they would be marching by, pouring from the depths of their rude throats that same "*Heil dir im Siegeskranz*". We awakened always with that same sensation ; in the end it grew almost intolerable. As in happier times one would open one's eyes and, after that swift ineffable moment before consciousness fully returns, ask oneself, "*What is that pleasant thing that happened to me yesterday ?*" — some bit of good fortune, some journey planned, some fine ambitious project about to be realized, perhaps some charming letter from a friend ; now one asked oneself, "*What awful thing has occurred ?*" "*Ah yes, the war*". Those grey hordes pouring down out of the northern plains to make life hideous, to wreck the world ! And just at a time when somehow as never before mankind seemed to be filled with goodwill, when vast ameliorations of the social scheme seemed possible; when the cynicism and pessimism and bitterness that had been left as the heritage of past wars had disappeared and on the earth there was a new generation that knew not war, when it seemed at last that life in all its glory and beauty was about to become possible for vast numbers of people — then, this hideous thing ! And one rose wearily to face horrid uncertainties, to take up a heavy burden.

Over and over Belgians would say to me, "*We were too happy in our little country*". And then there would come a thought that brought its pang of reproach : we, after all, could not fully realize what it meant to those whose country had been so shamelessly invaded. De Leval, usually so cheerful, so full of spirit, would go about his task very quietly and very much depressed ; and one day little Hermancito, thinking of his own poor distracted Mexico, said to me, "*You can turn your eyes toward the great nation where there is peace*". Ah yes ! "*Civis Romanus sum !* But it seemed selfish . . ."

Villalobar was insisting that the telephone service be restored, but I did not know why it should be ; it was a relief to be without that supreme nuisance, whose disadvantages so far outweigh its merits that it should never be restored in this world once it could be done away with. We were without news except the statements posted now and then on the walls by the military authorities, and about these the Belgians would gather, and after reading them turn away with sneering incredulity. We knew that the Germans were marching on Paris and we expected each morning to hear that they had got there. There were reports that Charleroi had been passed on the way south ; the guns could be heard no longer in the *banlieue* of the city. The Uhlans — a word that connoted all fearful, shuddering things — were said to be within forty kilometers of Paris. There were always rumours of coming relief. One evening came the Countess S reporting a large English army at Vilvorde, which, she said, would be in Brussels in the morning ; within three days the reported English army had swelled to one hundred thousand and had advanced to Laeken, in the northern suburbs of Brussels. Battles were already in progress in the plains west of the city ; they could be seen from the Palais de Justice ! A lawyer of my acquaintance came breathlessly to the Legation to say that he had seen a cavalry charge himself from the ramp of the great structure ; he said if we hurried we might see it. Out, then, we rushed and gazed far over those plains toward the west in the warm, glittering September haze ; but we saw no cavalry charge, no battle — nothing. I asked the *agent de police* standing there gloomily in his *képi* and cape ; he had seen nothing. I asked him why the crowd assembled there every day.

" *Il n'y a absolument rien à voir, Monsieur le Ministre,*" he said in regret. " *Tous les Bruxellois restent chez eux en temps de paix sans jamais regarder le beau panorama, mais depuis la guerre la rampe de la terrasse est toujours occupée d'une foule énorme.*"

Though now and then we did hear, after all, some good news, as on that evening when, driving home at dinner-time along the Rue de la Loi — its long line of lamps already lighted, stretching away and dipping to rise again to the sky that was brilliant with a wonderful sunset — I had a telegram from our Consul at Aix-la-Chapelle saying that McCutcheon, Cobb, Bennet, and Lewis were there. So they were safe after all, and we were all relieved.

Then we began to note a new phenomenon — new, at least, in Brussels : women begging in the street. Hunger, another of war's companions, had come to town. I had a visit of a group of citizens asking me to have food imported from England. But how was I or any one to import it ? Burgomaster Max asked Villalobar and me to come to see him, and we went. He wished us to be patrons of a relief committee that was being organized to provide food for the poor of the city ; the situation was desperate. We agreed to act as patrons of the committee of distinguished Belgian citizens, at the head of which was M. Ernest Solvay, the kindly, elderly Belgian millionaire who had made an immense fortune by the "*Solvay process*", which he invented for the production of soda. He had devoted his fortune in great measure to the poor, had endowed institutions ; the popular school in the Parc Léopold bore his name. He was a modest little man of simple manner and attire, with a kindly grey-bearded face, and blue eyes that were filled with sympathy and pity. He was at the head of the committee that met that first morning in September there in the Burgomaster's cabinet at the Hôtel de Ville ; he and other wealthy men had given liberally and were to provide food for the poor of the city. Villalobar and I were there in our capacity of patrons, and another *affiche* was soon posted on the walls of Brussels announcing this new charity or this new justice, or attempt at justice.

We did not know then, Villalobar and I, just what it was all so soon to lead to ; we gave our names, little dreaming what tremendous drafts it was to make on our sympathies and on all that we had of tact and diplomacy, nor how it was to weld our own friendship. We talked of other things, since the future, fortunately, is ever closed : of that old Spain of which he was such a typical representative ; of that new America where he had spent his youth ; and of the strange, romantic mingling of their destinies — an epic beyond the reach of human imagination. Under the proud exterior he had a sensitive heart ; he was full of expedients, of resources unlimited, and he was wholly without fear. And what a manner he had with the Germans, who know no equals, only superiors or inferiors ! I can say of this good friend — it is a word that I am too old to use lightly — as Madame de Sévigné said of Montaigne : "*Quel voisin de campagne il aurait fait !*"

He had served not only at Washington — once as Minister — but at London and at Paris, and out of his long experience he could recount with a touch of droll humour the most charming anecdotes and the most interesting personal reminiscences. He had been Minister to Portugal — was there during the revolution.

General von Lüttwitz had told us one afternoon, Villalobar and me, that a new Governor-General was coming, some famous victorious pasha

from Turkey ; he would install a civil government and show Belgians how to govern. A civil government The Germans were to have passed through Brussels in three days ; and they had been there for three weeks, gradually spreading out over all the Ministries and very much at home. And now they were going to install a civil administration. It had a somewhat too permanent sound !

Brussels was perturbed, for the coming of a Governor and the manner of it might have its effect on the fate of Belgium. There was a word on everybody's lips that no one dared to pronounce ; did it mean — did it mean — annexation?

The victorious Pasha duly arrived, to be followed later by whole regiments of functionaries\_ It was the old Field-Marshal Baron von der Goltz. I had word that the new Governor-General would pay me a formal call on Thursday, the 3rd, in the afternoon. So, then, on that day, promptly at four, His Excellency Field-Marshal Baron von der Goltz Pasha, in blue Bismarckian uniform and decorations, a little squat black helmet, wearing an enormous sword, arrived with his staff in two big grey automobiles, amid great excitement in the Rue de Trèves. The Pasha, a big man and old, had a heavy, mottled, much-scarred face, and wore large, round, gleaming spectacles that gave him a look almost jovial. He expressed himself in correct French, and thanked me for my work in charge of the German Legation. He said something of his experiences in Turkey, remained but a few minutes, smiled, bowed, and was gone.

It was on that occasion that I met a man with whom I was to have much to do for the next two and a half years. He was a remarkably handsome man in his smart uniform of bluish-grey with white facings, something less than six feet in height and of elegant form — a man to make a figure anywhere. His neatly trimmed black hair, his closely cropped moustache, the evidence of a careful though by no means a foppish toilet—in short, his general well-groomed air, his easy carriage and manner — marked him out among all the others, indeed among all the officers who came to Brussels, as a man of the world. There was something of the air of youth about him, though he must then have been verging on fifty. The expression of his vigilant, searching blue eyes, in which as one came to know him one recognized his moods, was now and then of an almost smiling ingenuousness. Indeed his expression was often smiling, and the ruddy colour came and went in his smooth cheeks with his smile, though it was never the smile of joviality. There were the reserves of a man who sought to be polite, correct, even punctilious, but perhaps on his guard, and wary of a world in which the ambitious have to keep their eyes, however blue and smiling, always open. Such, in a way, was the Baron von der Lancken-Wakenitz, one of the ablest of the young men in German diplomacy. He owned landed estates in Silesia, and was already a Minister Plenipotentiary accredited to one of the German States — Saxony, I think. He could speak I know not how many languages beside his own, though he did not like to speak English, and he always conversed in that French, which he had so perfectly mastered during his ten years service as Counsellor in the German Embassy at Paris. He had served at Rome and Madrid, and had come to Brussels to occupy an important post in the Government of Occupation that was about to be established. We exchanged but few words that day for the call was brief, but we were destined during the succeeding two and a half years to become better acquainted and to exchange many words, the occasional asperity of which not ail the delicate nuances of the French language could soften or shade away.

The *affiche* next morning bore the declaration by which the Field-Marshal proclaimed his accession to the seat of power in the little kingdom. The people gathered about in sorrowful, silent groups, reading the announcement of their fate. Many of them with scraps of paper and bits of lead-pencils almost surreptitiously copied it clown. The proclamation stated that the German armies were advancing victoriously in France, and then proceeded to threaten the population with dire consequences if any act inimical to the German cause were committed. And then there was the declaration of a new and amazing doctrine new in our times, at least, and in the Western world : namely, that the innocent should be punished as well as the guilty !

" *C'est la dure nécessité de la guerre que les punitions d'actes hostiles frappent en dehors des coupables aussi des innocents.*"\*

The sinister threat needed no commentary after Louvain, Dinant, Aerschot, and a hundred other towns to the east, still smoking at that very moment under their reins. The people read it in silence but took what comfort they could in another phrase :

" *Citoyens belges I Je ne demande à personne de renier ses sentiments patriotiques.*"\*\*

Nor did they miss the implications of another feature — one little word, and that an insignificant preposition, suddenly swollen with an immense importance, pregnant with a deep meaning. That was the preposition "*in*" — Governor-General in Belgium, then, and not Governor-General *of* Belgium. Men stood, perhaps, more erect ; they were not required to renounce any of their patriotic sentiments, and the land was not annexed I

But it would not have been Brussels had not the people had their fun out of it ; with that old and unconquerable Belgian sense of humour, that remarkable resilience of spirit which is innate in the Belgian character. Somewhere, on a wall of the lower town, the *affiche* had been put up so high that it could not be read by the passers-by, and a buxom woman of the people, a *bonne Bruxelloise*, with the *naïveté* that is also a part of the Brussels nature, brought from her shop a ladder and mounted upon it to read it for the benefit of the crowd. But her voice was not strong enough, and a man — some droll wag — climbed up in her stead and read the proclamation with running comment on its statements, and then held out his hands in benediction and said :

" *Et maintenant, mes enfants, je vous bénis ; avec ça [waving a hand at the proclamation] et six cents vous aurez un verre de bière dans tous les cabarets de Bruxelles.*"\*\*\*

It was as much respect as the Germans ever inspired in Belgium.

**Brand WITHLOCK**

London ; William HEINEMANN ; 1919.

\* "*It is the stern necessity of war that the punishment for hostile acts fall not only on the guilty, but on the innocent as well.*"

\*\* "*Citizen of Belgium I I ask no one to renounce his patriotic sentiments.*"

\*\*\* "*And now, my children, I bless you ; with that and three cents you can get a glass of beer in any saloon in Brussels.*" (A cent at Brussels is two centimes.)

Von der Goltz's proclamation in full was as follows :

## PROCLAMATION

Sa Majesté l'Empereur d'Allemagne, après l'occupation de la plus grande partie du territoire belge, a daigné me nommer gouverneur général en Belgique. J'ai établi le siège du gouvernement général à Bruxelles (Ministère des Sciences et des Arts, rue de la Loi).

Par ordre de Sa Majesté, une administration civile a été installée auprès du gouvernement général (Ministère de la Guerre, rue de Louvain). Son Excellence Monsieur von Sandt a été appelé aux fonctions de chef de cette administration.

Les armées allemandes s'avancent victorieusement en France. Ma tâche sera de conserver la tranquillité et l'ordre public en territoire belge.

Tout acte hostile des habitants contre les militaires allemands, toute tentative de troubler leurs communications avec l'Allemagne, de gêner ou de couper les services des chemins de fer, du télégraphe et du téléphone, seront punis très sévèrement. Toute résistance ou révolte contre l'administration allemande sera réprimée sans pardon.

**C'est la dure nécessité de la guerre que les punitions d'actes hostiles frappent, en dehors des coupables, aussi des innocents.** Le devoir s'impose d'autant plus à tous les citoyens raisonnables d'exercer une pression sur les éléments turbulents en vue de les retenir de toute action dirigée contre l'ordre public. Les citoyens belges désirant vaquer paisiblement à leurs occupations n'ont rien à craindre de la part des troupes ou des autorités allemandes. Autant que faire se pourra, le commerce devra être repris, les usines devront recommencer à travailler, les moissons être rentrées.

Citoyens belges ! **Je ne demande à personne de renier ses sentiments patriotiques**, mais j'attends de vous tous une soumission raisonnable et une obéissance absolue vis-à-vis des ordres du gouvernement général. Je vous invite à lui montrer de la confiance et à lui prêter votre concours. J'adresse cette invitation spécialement aux fonctionnaires de l'État et des communes qui sont restés à leurs postes. Plus vous donnerez suite à cet appel, plus vous servirez votre patrie.

Le Gouverneur général, BARON vox DER GOLTZ, *Feld-maréchal*,

Fait à. Bruxelles, le 2 septembre 1914

# Proklamation.

Seine Majestät der Deutsche Kaiser haben geruht, mich nach okkupierung belgischen Gebiets zum Generalgouverneur in Belgien zu ernennen. Ich habe den Sitz des Generalgouvernements in Brüssel (Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Künste, rue de la Loi) aufgeschlagen.

Auf Grund weiterer Anordnung Seiner Majestät ist dem Generalgouverneur eine Zivilverwaltung angegliedert (Kriegsministerium, rue de Louvain an deren Spitze Seine Exzellenz Herr von Sandt steht.

Die deutschen Heere dringen siegreich in Frankreich vor. Hier im belgischen Gebiete Ruhe und Ordnung aufrecht zu erhalten, ist Aufgabe der Generalgouvernements.

Jede feindselige Handlung der Einwohner-schaft gegen Angehörige der deutschen Heeres, jeder Versuch, ihren Verkehr mit der Heimat zu stören, Eisenbahnen, Telegraphen, Fernsprechverbindungen zu gefährden oder gar zu unterbrechen, wird unnahebsichtlich geandmet werden. Aufruhr oder Widerstand gegen die deutsche Verwaltung haben ruck-sichtslose Niederwerfung zu gewärtigen.

Die harte Notwendigkeit des Krieges bringt es mit sich, dass bei Bestrafung feindseliger Handlungen Unschuldige mit den Schuldigen leiden. Unsommer ist es Pflicht aller verständig denkenden Bewohner Belgiens, die unruhigen Elemente im Lande von jeder Ausschreitung gegen die öffentliche Ordnung abzuhalten.

Kein belgischer Bürger, der trieffertig seinem Erwebe nachgeht, hat irgend etwas von seiten der deutschen Truppen und Behörden zu betuerchten. Soweit irgend moeglich, sollen Handel und Wandel wieder aufgenommen, die industriellen Betriebe wieder in Gang gebracht und die Einbringung der Ernte vollendet werden.

## Belgier !

Von Niemand wird verleugnung seiner vaterlaendischen Gesinnung verlangt, wohl aber eine vernuenftige Fuegsamkeit und unbedingter Gehorsam gegen die Anordnungen des Generalgouvernements. Von Eurem Verhalten, von dem Vertrauen und dem Masse der Unterstuetzung, die das Volk, insbesondere die im Lande verbliebenen Staats- und Gemeindebeamten, dem Generalgouvernement entgegen bringen, wird es abhaengen ob die neue Verwaltung Euch und Eurem Lande zum Segen gereicht.

Gegeben, Bruessel, den 2. September 1914.

Der Kaiserliche General-Gouverneur in Belgien,  
**Freiherr von der Goltz,**  
Generalfeldmarschall.

# Proclamation.

Sa Majesté l'Empereur d'Allemagne, après l'occupation de la plus grande partie du territoire belge, a daigné me nommer Gouverneur Général en Belgique. J'ai établi le siège du Gouvernement Général à Bruxelles (Ministère des Sciences et des Arts, rue de la Loi).

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C'est la dure nécessité de la guerre que les punitions d'actes hostiles frappent, en dehors des coupables, aussi des innocents. Le devoir s'impose d'autant plus à tous les citoyens raisonnables d'exercer une pression sur les éléments turbulents en vue de les retenir de toute action dirigée contre l'ordre public.

Les citoyens belges désirant vaquer paisiblement à leurs occupations n'ont rien à craindre de la part des troupes ou des autorités allemandes. Autant que faire se pourra, le commerce devra être repris, les usines devront recommencer à travailler, les moissons être rentrées.

## Citoyens Belges,

Je ne demande à personne de renier ses sentiments patriotiques, mais j'attends de vous tous une soumission raisonnable et une obéissance absolue vis-à-vis des ordres du Gouvernement Général. Je vous invite à lui montrer de la confiance et à lui prêter votre concours. J'adresse cette invitation spécialement aux fonctionnaires de l'Etat et des communes qui sont restés à leurs postes. Plus vous donnerez suite à cet appel, plus vous servirez votre patrie.

Fait à Bruxelles, le 2 septembre 1914.

Le Gouverneur Général,  
**Baron von der Goltz,**  
Feldmarschall.

# Proclamatie.

Zijne Majesteit de Keizer van Duitschland na bezetting van het grootste gedeelte van het belgisch territorium, heeft mij tot Generaal Gouverneur in België benoemd. Ik heb den zetel van het Generaal-Gouvernement in Brussel (Ministerie van Schoone Kunsten, Wetstraat) opgeschlagen.

Op bevel van Zijne Majesteit, is er eene burgerlijke administratie bij het Generaal-Gouvernement ingericht. Zijne Excellentie de Heer von Sandt is benoemd tot hoofd dezer administratie (zetel: Ministerie van Oorlog, Leuvense weg).

De deutsche troepen dringen overwinnen! in Frankrijk binnen. Mijn taak zal zijn de kalme en openbare orde op belgisch gebied oprecht te houden.

Alle vijandelijke handeling der inwoners tegen aangehörigen van het deutsche leger, alle verzoek den verkeer met Duitschland te storen, den dienst der ijzeren wegen, des telegraafs en des telefoons te belemmeren of te breken, zal zeer streng gestraft worden. Jedere wederstand of revolte tegen de deutsche administratie zal zonder genade gestraft worden.

Het is de harde noodzakelijkheid van den oorlog, dat de straffen van vijandelijke handelingen, buiten de schuldigen ook de onschuldigen treffen. Des te meer is het de plicht van alle verstandige burgers op de onrustige elementen eenen druk uit te oefenen om deze van iedere handeling tegen de openbare orde te weerhouden.

De belgische burgers, die wenschen in rust hare nijverheid na te gaan, hebben niets te vreezen van wege de troepen of de deutsche autoriteiten. Zooveel het mogelijk zal zijn, moet de handel hernomen, de fabrieken in 't werk hersteld, de oogst binnengebracht worden.

## Belgische burgers,

Ik vraag aan niemand zijne patriotische gevoelens te ontzeggen, maar ik verwacht van U allen eene verstandige onderwerping en eene volledige gehoorzaamheid tegenover de bevelen van het Generaal-Gouvernement. Ik verzoek U hem vertrouwen te schenken en hem Uwe hulp te verloozen. Ik richt dit verzoek hooftzakelijk aan alle ambtenaaren van den Staat en van de gemeenten, die op hunne plaats gebleven zijn. Hoemeer U dezen wensch voldoen zult, des te meer zult U uw vaderland nuttig zijn.

Gegeven te Brussel, den 2<sup>o</sup> September 1914.

De Generaal-Gouverneur,  
**Baron von der Goltz,**  
Veldmaarschalk.