

August 3, 1914.—Behind the Venetian blinds of the ministries over in the rue de la Loi, the lights burn all night, and after long conferences with the King at the Palace, the ministers, de Broqueville¹ at their head, have drawn up their calm and stately reply to Germany's ultimatum; it was delivered promptly yesterday, to von Below. Germany has not even awaited Belgium's response to her amazing ultimatum, but with her troops invaded Belgian soil today at Visé. And Belgium will fight. The King goes to Parliament tomorrow, and the army is mobilized at Liège.

I was routed out early this morning by a telephone message from the French Legation asking if I would receive Klobukowski² at nine o'clock. I divined his desire instantly; I knew he was coming to ask me to take over the protection of French interests in case the capital falls. I was downstairs in Gibson's³ room by eight, but Klobukowski sent Fontarce⁴ in his stead. Poor Fontarce! He was very haggard and pale, with heavy dark circles under his eyes; he had not been to bed at all; indeed there has been no sleep over at the French Legation at all; it is crowded day and night by excited members of the French colony. It was somehow terrible to see the agitation, the tragic expression in his mobile face—even his beard seemed to have grown more grey, and his brow was moist with perspiration, matting down the thin locks of his banded hair.

¹ Baron de Broqueville, Premier of Belgium in 1914.

² M. Klobukowski, French Minister to Belgium.

³ Hugh S. Gibson, Secretary of the Legation.

⁴ Secretary of the French Legation.

He was somehow, to me, the incarnation of the demoralization and intensity of these terrible times; he was in agony, as is his dear and charming country.

He nodded sadly in affirmation, even before I could put the question he must have read in my eyes—we had been somehow still hoping selfishly that we might escape the horror.

"Oui," he said, *"c'est la guerre."*

He presented his chief's compliments and excuses, and wanted to know if I would take over the French Legation. I was pleased, and frankly told him so. He told me of the ultimatum that von Below had delivered to Davignon last evening; and this morning, at 1:30 o'clock, von Below has an interview with van der Elst.¹

The Legation was again crowded with Americans, in panic, demanding advice, money, passports, shelter. Cruger² cannot turn the passports fast enough.

I went upstairs and told Nell that we were in for it; that war was now certain. I was too busy all morning, however, to notice how the family were affected; at noon Nell told me that Mrs. Boyd³ had decided to go home; she was sadly shaken. Great bustling about then, rushing up and down stairs; the servants flying everywhere, the clamoring Americans in the corridors below—well, I had to keep my head anyway!... We got Mrs. Boyd off at one o'clock, bundling her and her bags into the motor, her steamer trunks on top, and Alice, her maid, weeping, bidding the servants good-bye, and clambering into the motor after Mrs. Boyd—her black gown, that is, Alice's black gown, all unloosened down the back, revealing her white undergarments. Glad to have that care off my mind at any rate!

Mrs. Willard, delicate, pretty, beautifully gowned, calm, unconcerned, in again at noon with her nice daughter, still undecided what to do. I was half distracted, and finally decided for her. It was nearly one o'clock; the train for Ostend leaves at two, and I said:

"My dear Mrs. Willard, you must go, and go at once!"

"But my old Sèvres; but my watch is being repaired; and my trunks..."

I called de Leval,⁴ gave him orders to go with her and see her

¹ Baron van der Elst, of the Belgian Foreign Office.

² Clerk of the Legation.

³ Mrs. Sarah M. Boyd of Milwaukee, a friend staying with the Whitlocks.

⁴ Maître Gaston de Leval, legal adviser to the Legation.

off, and then led her and her daughter to their waiting carriage.

"But my trunks—we can never catch the two o'clock."

I almost pushed the little woman into the carriage and at last they drove away—and de Leval got them off. Thank God!

Klobukowski called this afternoon, to ask me to take over his Legation in case of eventualities. He was smiling, as usual, this fat, clever, French politician with the Polish name, and showed none of the signs of the terrible wear and tear exhibited by Fontarce this morning. I told him that I should be delighted to act for his interests and wired Washington for permission to do so.

The fleeing Americans continued to crowd the Legation all day, and we were busy trying to reassure and comfort them—a terrible task. They all think that I have some supernatural power, that I can evoke ships, money, care, comfort for them; predict the course of the war, tell them where they will be safe, and how long the war will last, and so on. It is maddening, but as Carlyle used to say, "Courage, and shuffle the cards."

There are a number of American tourists stranded at the hôtel de Bellevue, so I went over there this afternoon to look them up. I found a group, for the most part, of charming, refined people.... I had tea with them; the Misses — of Washington came in; the eldest of the three, or if not the eldest, the ranking sister, in her hoarse voice of command, squared herself before me, and after blowing and bawling about her acquaintance with the great of the earth announced:

"If anything happens, you'll have to take care of me!"

"I'm sure," I replied, bowing, "that Madame is abundantly able to take care of herself."

After dinner, the evening being soft and warm, Nell and I walked out with our mothers, and took a stroll along the quiet boulevard. I talked to Mother about Father, her interest in the fact that she was in Europe—and I resented this stupid, inimical, unnecessary war that is ruining her enjoyment. Then up late enciphering telegrams to Washington....

Miss Larner¹ of the Department of State at Washington, who came over on the *Laplant* a week ago—the ship that brought our Mothers—and was caught in this fierce maelstrom of war, called at the Legation, and we have asked her to help us in the heavy work.

I have, too, the services of the excellent de Leval.

¹ Miss Caroline Larner.

THE GERMAN INVASION

7

From Berlin there is a statement that a French aviator has thrown bombs near Nuremberg and the Germans, as though they were shocked and surprised, say that this impels them to war.

Burgomaster Max has issued a decree forbidding an advance in the price of food.