

August 6, 1914.—At half past eight o'clock this morning, Carton de Wiart was announced, on a matter of immediate importance. I went down to find the big, handsome Belgian Minister of Justice in my cabinet, haggard from sleepless nights, but well-groomed as ever and elegant in high hat and frock coat. He came to inform me that the Belgian Government had reliable information that there was a wireless telegraph instrument on top of the German Legation; the *gardes civiques* detailed there (at my request) to protect the Legation had heard it working during the night. The Government, of course, wished to be correct and there were no precedents, but he proposed that the *Procureur du Roi* and some of the Justices of the Court institute an inquiry and in a regular and formal and legal manner ascertain the facts.

"But," I said, "there is a much more practical method."

"What is it?"

"To go take a look," I said. "You'll come with me, won't you? Let's be off."

He was surprised but pleased. I told him to go get a wireless telegraph expert and I would go with him whenever he was ready. He went away, came back in half an hour with his expert, a light, agile young chap in rubber shoes—"creepers"—and with Gibson and de Leval, we went over to the German Legation (the civil guard crowding up to assure us that the instrument could still be heard spluttering away); routed out the surprised old Grobowsky, and with him to guide us, ascended to the garret. He opened a trap-door in the roof, and the lovely morning light came through from a patch of the blue sky above; then produced a frail little ladder and I invited Carton de Wiart to ascend. He looked at the little ladder, then down his dignified front of frock coat, then at his high hat; ministerial dignity could never hope to ascend such a little ladder and clamber onto a roof!

And so I went up and the expert came after, and Gibson, and then we clambered about over those red tiles among the chimney pots. Monsieur l'Expert went everywhere, clipped a few wires—telephone, no doubt—but shook his head; no wireless to be found anywhere. While we were looking about, I saw to my surprise a trap-door, almost at my feet, slowly raise, then a head came forth, and presently there arose, like the morning sun before my eyes, a dark handsome face, hair carefully combed down, monocle in left—astonished—eye, high tight collar, butterfly cravat, smart coat, thin hands, manicured nails, a cigarette—and there was Cavalcanti!¹

He was speechless with surprise, but I divined the situation, greeted him, said:

"If I'm violating Brazilian territory, it's quite by mistake and unintentional, and I apologize."

He laughed, and I explained, and he told me that his chief, beholding men on the roof of his Legation, had sent him up to investigate.

And while we were talking, suddenly, a sound, a sharp rasping sound, broken into what might very well have been dots and dashes—"Zsszt!!—... Ssszt!!—Zst—Zt—Zt—Ssst"—It was precisely like the wireless I had heard on the Atlantic. Monsieur l'Expert cocked his head, pricked up his ears, and then we all fixed the place whence came the sound—and it was a rusty weathervane squeaking in the wind! And so that sensation ended—to the regret of the civil guard when we told them.

Carton told us that the Germans had burned Visé, and shot down the inhabitants who had spontaneously taken arms to defend themselves.

Back to the Legation then, and all morning long the Germans crowded the halls, turning the Legation into a bedlam, and Gibson was trying to arrange for a train to send them to Holland.

Le Baron Lahure telephoned, eleven o'clock, to ask me to sign a cheque for the 450,000 francs that Klobukowski had deposited to my credit. I sent de Leval to present my compliments and to say that I had not authorized such credit and so could not sign a cheque, but that de Leval would assist in annulling the whole operation, which he did.

In the afternoon, the crowd of Germans was larger, and learning

¹ Felix Cavalcanti de Lacerda, Secretary of the Brazilian Legation during the War.

that we were charged with protection of German interests, groups of the idle and curious gathered in the rue de Trèves. Then, over all the pandemonium, the horrid sound of strife, angry cries, and then blows on the outer door; the crowds had rushed upon some German entering the Legation, and when the door was closed behind him and in the faces of the crowd, they began kicking. But the admirable de Leval went out and spoke to the crowd—and the German cowered behind the steel filing case back in Cruger's room. I asked de Leval to send to the authorities for protection, and in half an hour a detail of his civil guard was posted at the Legation, patrolling the streets and all was quiet.

Then for a drive in the lovely Bois—and Brussels never so beautiful.

On my return I was told that the train for the Germans had been arranged and Gibson and Nasmith¹ were rounding up the Germans. But to make doubly sure I went myself, de Leval accompanying me, to see Carton de Wiart.

There in his office, then—and a great portrait of Tolstoy on an easel—Tolstoy and this madness! Carton was very kind and not the least bitter towards the Germans. All had been organized, admirable trains had been provided to convey 2,500 Germans to the Dutch frontier tonight, and we have telegraphed van Dyke,² who will have them met there by other trains, and so they will go back to Germany.

¹ American Vice-Consul in Brussels.

² Henry van Dyke, American Minister to Holland.