

February 20, 1917.—Villalobar in after tea to talk things over.

Showed me copy of a letter by the Cardinal to the Emperor as to the deported men; letter signed by all the personalities in Belgium. Von der Lancken brings word from Berlin that, on receipt of news of peace, the Emperor would order return of all the deported. Thus that great crime and blunder ends. Boyd in this morning telling me that the deported would not work in Germany, that they deliberately injured machinery, sang their patriotic songs in the workshops, and so on, demoralized other workmen, that the German people themselves disapproved of the measure. Thus, the application of a cold theory wrought once more in human history its own destruction, defeated its own purposes. Their misdeeds come down again on their own pate, as the psalmist said. And all that stubborn rage with which it was done! Like prohibitionists trying to "close" a town! Furthermore, those hundreds of thousands of Belgians in Germany, the land of the fettered press, must have had many a story to tell that the people there had never imagined before!

I forgot to say that I have got off a long cable [to the State Department] about conditions here.

The city full of soldiers; the schools closed, Lemonnier says, because of lack of coal. Gossip, that they are to be used as ambulances. The big offensive seems to be beginning; another butchery! The old rumor flies, too, that Brussels is to be in the *Etappen*.

And I am sick with care and worry because of my uncomfortable position. I can't remain here, because of diplomatic reasons. I can't go because of the relief. What to do?