

*August 19, 1918.*—I had a call this afternoon from Prince Reginald de Cröy, who is now an attaché at the Belgian Legation in London. I saw him in Brussels in 1914. He remained in Belgium for about a year after the war began, and then was obliged to flee, having been concerned with his sister in the affair that led to the Cavell tragedy. He was twenty-five days in reaching the frontier from Brussels, and was piloted out by Henri Bain, who was later condemned to death but succeeded in having his sentence commuted to life imprisonment. The Prince is a youngish man with a pleasant open countenance, a good manner, reddish moustache and sandy hair, combed flat but curiously waved at the ends. He is on his way to the Pyrenees for a rest. He talked to me about Prince Sixte de Bourbon, whom he knows well. Sixte is very angry over the treatment he received in the affair of the letter of Emperor Charles in which peace was offered to France. He told de Cröy that Czernin had written a similar letter to him, and feels that he was shamefully treated because Clemenceau had promised him to treat the whole matter as secret. De Cröy thinks that a chance for peace was lost because of the stupid way in which the whole matter was handled by the Allies. He thinks also that the allied recognition of the Czechoslovaks is another mistake, as it is a notice to Austria that her Empire will be dismembered and that therefore all chance to separate Austria from Germany and to make peace with her is now lost.

Nicholson was here—we were going to Brunevalle for dinner—but we stopped to have tea, during which de Cröy told us an interesting story of his experiences in the first days of the war. He was then with his sister at their château south of Mons on the French frontier, already engaged in that work of rescuing British soldiers which ultimately cost his sister her liberty and Miss Cavell and poor Baucq their lives. He said incidentally that Baucq was a fine fellow, and that Miss Cavell was exceedingly imprudent—talked to many persons about her work. The Prince himself went to see her and though she had never met him before she told him freely all that was going on, and advised him to escape, as she was being watched. This in

the summer of 1915. To return, however, to August, 1914. The Prince and his sister had converted their château into a hospital and had many English wounded there. On the twenty-fourth he saw Sir John French, then in retreat. On the twenty-fifth, in the afternoon, he and his sister sat down to have a cup of tea. Looking out of the window they saw some German officers entering the gates. They came in and proved to be General von Kluck, the Duke of Schleswig-Holstein, and his nephew Saxe-Meiningen. They said they wished to be quartered in the château and asked for a cup of tea. The Princess sent for extra cups. Von Kluck was correct, very grave, polite and rather silent. The Duke of Schleswig-Holstein, on the contrary, was very loud, offensive, and brutal. He began by being excessively pleasant in manner, and then sitting down to tea said: "You Belgians have certainly acted very badly towards us. We came to you as friends and look how you have received us." Said also that if King Leopold had been living he would not have done so. "He would have said: 'You want to pass? Very well.' Then he would have taken a map and said: 'You may pass here for one billion francs; here for two billions, and so on.'" The Princess was exasperated and said this was not so, whereupon the Duke became more and more offensive. They had the château searched, saying that English soldiers were hidden there. There were only four or five wounded English left. They demanded to know where their arms were. Prince de Cröy had thrown their guns and cartridges down a well; he told them they had no arms.

One of the officers, a doctor, brutally tore the bandages off their legs, saying he thought they were shamming. When they could find no arms the Duke noted the knives they had, took one of them and held it before the eyes of an English soldier, nearly dead with double pneumonia, saying in perfect English: "You kill German prisoners with these." The soldier revived and in anger denied the accusation.

The young Duke of Saxe-Meiningen told the Princess that the officers wished her and her brother to dine with them. She replied: "We do not wish to dine with you. You must know that you are our enemies. We did not invite you here, and we do not feel like sitting at table with you." The young Duke understood and seemed to sympathize with her point of view, and went away. A table in the dining-room was arranged for about fifteen of the officers. When the Duke of Schleswig-Holstein sat down to dine he demanded to know why the Princess and her brother were not at table. He got up and went into the hall, called them before him and flew into a beastly

rage, saying; "You refuse to sit at table with us. You have poisoned the food," and so on. He made a most disgusting exhibition of himself, much to the discomfiture of Saxe-Meiningen, who seemed to be embarrassed by his uncle's behaviour. He called the Prince de Cröy aside and said: "Can't you do something to quiet his rage? Can't you come to the table?" De Cröy, wishing to placate him, more especially as his sister absolutely refused to appear at dinner, said: "Since you accuse us of having poisoned the food, I will sit down at the table and taste the food before you." In this way the rage of the Duke was somewhat appeased, and de Cröy sat at table with them.

The Germans had expected to stay the night at the château, but at about nine o'clock, without notice, and without giving any reason, they all got up and left, went a few miles farther on and spent the night at a country house which had been abandoned by its owners. Prince de Cröy visited this house as soon as the Germans had left it, a day or so after. They had broken, evidently with deliberation, all the finer articles of furniture and *objets d'art*, and had committed acts of an unspeakable bestiality in all the bed-chambers.

Later on they had a visit from the Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, who recently committed suicide. He conducted himself well, was very considerate, apologized for his presence, saying that it was one of the unfortunate incidents of war, that he was acting under orders, and so on. He sat by the bedsides of the wounded British soldiers, and talked to them kindly in perfect English.

Later on they had also as a guest, General von Kuehen, if I give the name correctly. He was commanding at Maubeuge, was very brutal and disgusting. De Cröy says that Maubeuge need not have fallen when it did, that there was plenty of food, arms, ammunition, and soldiers in the citadel, and that the German line was very thin. They might not have prevented the ultimate capture of the city, but the garrison could have escaped very easily, in fact the Germans were fearful that it would do so. Four hundred French soldiers of those ordered to surrender refused under the leadership of a captain to do so and made their way easily to Dunkirk. De Cröy thinks there was something queer in the whole affair, and so did Nicholson.

De Cröy gave us also many interesting incidents of their experiences in helping British stragglers to escape out of the country.

After he had gone Nicholson and Nell and I drove to Brunevalle by way of St.-Jouin. Very cloudy and threatening. Began to rain as

soon as we reached Brunevalle—a fine Scotch mist. While waiting for our dinner to be prepared, we walked down to the sea and then along the roads in this fine, penetrating mist, which settled in a cloud of grey fog over those valleys with their gorse and heather. A wild melancholy country in the rain. We dined in wet clothes and drove back to town in the mist and fog.

The Wild-Cat Division came through town today.