

Sunday, February 23, 1919.—This morning I had the visit of Herbert Samuel, K.C., the English liberal. Had been invited . . . to dine with him the other evening but couldn't. A charming man, most polished and cultured and simple. One notes, with regret, such a difference between the English in general and our men in general. There are exceptions on both sides, of course, but the English are so much more gentlemanly than our men—who seem, or so many of whom seem, to be hard, breezy, dominating. . . .

Another interesting visitor today was Mr. Van de Kerchove, lawyer at Brussels, who is "Fidelio" of *La Libre Belgique*. He is to write a history of the paper, and wishes me to give him a preparatory word for it, which I promised. He told me many interesting incidents, how he contrived by an Alsatian soldier to get a copy of *La Libre Belgique* on the desk of von Bissing at every issue. He met by accident one day, rue de la Loi, a German officer whom he recognized as a Frenchman, an old college chum of his at Louvain. The officer put his fingers to his lips, and moved on. The next day he met him on the rue Royale, near the statue of Comte Belliard, and they spoke. The man was a French spy in German uniform. . . . They worked together, and sometimes visited von Bissing's bureau in the Ministry of Arts and stole the papers from his desk! There was a captain always on guard there, but at noon when von Bissing went to luncheon, the Captain went into an adjoining room to talk with a stenographer, and stayed there long enough to smoke a cigarette, sometimes two. This the spy in that uniform and with his perfect knowledge of German had discovered,

and stood watch while Van de Kerchove slipped in and stole the papers.

He was never discovered, but was arrested finally, charged with complicity in publishing *La Libre Belgique*. The Kaiser had ordered the *La Libre Belgique* man shot if he was ever discovered, and a heavy price had been placed on his head. Kerchove was arrested, but even in prison contrived to continue to write his articles. His daughter used to send him tobacco, matches, food and a thermos bottle of hot coffee. He secured a match box as a souvenir, it reminded him of his daughter; one day playing with it idly and fondly, he saw that the word "thermos" was written on it. When the coffee came, he examined the thermos bottle and found that it could be unscrewed, taken apart in some manner. Then, he sent out messages, and his articles for *La Libre Belgique*. When in prison at Vilvorde, he communicated by means of boxes of strawberries. He was not condemned to death, but to imprisonment, ultimately.