

November 29, 1918.—Starting for Ste.-Gudule, where there was to be a high mass sung for the dead who fell in the war, when, unannounced, Hoover arrived, accompanied by Poland and Gibson, the latter grinning like a Cheshire cat and cracking jokes as usual. Hoover I had not seen for two years. He has a fatter, flabbier look, as of a man who takes no exercise and no care of himself; his eyes have reddish rims, and he grows more negligent in his personal appearance. I had to go on to the church, where the King and Queen were, and all the diplomatic corps, and the cardinal to officiate at the mass. Nellidow<sup>2</sup> was there, in evidence—representing what? He has a remarkable toupée! The service very impressive. *En route* to the church, entering the rue Royale, the Queen went by in a motor and bowed to me.

After the mass we had a session in the Ministry for Foreign

<sup>2</sup> The Russian Minister under the old régime.

Affairs, in that room which, when last I saw it, was inhabited by Von Lüttwitz, Delacroix, Hymans, Francqui, de Wouters, and another Belgian were there,<sup>1</sup> and Hoover, Poland, Gibson and I. We discussed the revictualing of Belgium, the reconstruction, and the financial situation. This is critical. Belgium has 3,000,000,000 paper francs in circulation, to which must be added 2,000,000,000 to be refunded by Germany to represent the marks they stole from the Banque Nationale and the Société Générale. Their gold reserve is only 250,000,000 francs.

We were there until one o'clock. They wished to know of Hoover when he would be back, and he did not like to say, saying that he feared they would "create a disturbance"; they do indeed wish him to accept a reception. Hymans told me that the University of Brussels was to confer on him the degree of LL.D. Finally Hoover fixed the 7th of December as the day.

Hoover, Poland, and Gibson dined here tonight. Hoover arrived at 6:30 and we talked here until dinner-time, he saying he would not dress, but just washed his hands while I went upstairs and dressed.

Most interesting, his stories of what had gone on in America. He has done a tremendous job, and is a man of great power and intelligence. He thought the President was making a big mistake in coming to Europe, and hoped that he could be induced to make his first speech to the American army and then to the people of Europe. He says that a nasty underhanded campaign is being made against the President in England and in France, and that the visits of King George and King Albert have been arranged for the purpose of taking the edge off the President's visit. I asked him the reasons for the recent defeat in the Congressional elections, and he said that it was primarily due to the utter detestation in which Congressmen are held, in America as everywhere, indeed. I spoke of this phenomenon; that at a moment when democracy is advancing, parliaments are held in such contempt as never before. He told me a saying of Governor Stuart of Virginia, who remarked to Hoover: "Congress and legislatures

<sup>1</sup> Immediately before King Albert's reëntury into Brussels, a new Cabinet was formed. It contained three Socialists, three liberals, and six Catholics. Delacroix, as noted above, was Prime Minister; Hymans was Minister of Foreign Affairs; Baron Janssen was Minister of War; and Vandervelde was Minister of Justice. This Ministry was in charge of the introduction of the liberal reforms previously announced by the King, including the grant of universal male suffrage.

in general are like rail fences; every rail is crooked and they all point in the wrong direction, but together they make a good fence."

We had a pleasant time at dinner and it all went well; we thought the presence of Gibson might make it difficult, but it did not. I told Hoover that it was a pleasure to talk to a man as intelligent as he, and he waved his hand at a picture of the President, smiled, and said:

"I've been with that man for a year."