

December 17, 1918.—This has been, in some ways, the most remarkable day of my life. I have had an extraordinary ovation at the Chamber. It was altogether an American day.... All morning and all afternoon, until three o'clock, I worked over my speech, and at 4:15 drove to the Palace of the Nations. I was the first of the three to arrive and was conducted to the reception room of the Senate where the President received me. Villalobar came in presently, then Van Vollenhoven, and after awhile the Cardinal—

that tall, distinguished figure in scarlet—and the tapestries for a rich background. Presented to most of the Senators there waiting. At half past four we are conducted to the Chamber—the Cardinal had gone on in. An usher cries:

“The Protecting Ministers!”

And then all the Deputies and Senators standing up to receive us—and applause breaking forth. The colleagues and others on the benches to the left. Spectators all around, and overhead, the galleries crowded with men and women. Great fauteuils were set for us on the floor of the House below the tribune. Villalobar shown to the fauteuil in the center, I to his right, Van Vollenhoven on his left—before us, facing us in a semi-circle of fauteuils, all the Ministers, Delacroix in the centre, Hymans to his right, smiling at me and talking to Vandervelde.

Favereau arrives and makes an address, very flattering to us and especially to me, and very just to America, and when he mentions the name of Wilson, there is a tremendous demonstration; the whole chamber rings with applause, “*Vive Wilson! Vive Wilson!*” I have to stand and acknowledge the tribute to my country: it lasts several minutes.

Then Delacroix, standing and facing us, makes an address recounting our services, and all the way through he is interrupted by applause. Then Pouillet made a brief address, telling us that as a souvenir of the event and of our services, our busts would be placed in the hall of the Chamber, and a replica given to us—and there is more applause. We stand up, we have been compelled to stand again and again at the frequent outbursts of applause and cheering—and at last it is our turn.

Villalobar started it off, reading his speech, which was very flattering to me, but full of repeated reference to “My August Sovereign” who had done everything and was the “passionate friend of the workingman.” He was frequently applauded.

And now my turn—I am standing and the chamber stands and applauds and cheers. Of course I had the best of the situation, because I represented the best, the biggest country, and that country had fed Belgium and had won the war—there was all that in the demonstration, but I could feel too a personal note, a personal warmth and friendliness in it all, and I felt as much at home there, and as sure of their sympathy—I might say admiration—as if I were standing up in Memorial Hall at home to address a mass-meeting of independents.

I began my address, reading it from my notes, though I knew them almost well enough to have dispensed with them; but since it was in French I was afraid to stray far from them. When I spoke of my embarrassment they smiled, and then applause began, and when I got to the period about the Cardinal—he was sitting over on the left, near the dear colleagues—there was a great ovation for him (Villalobar had mentioned no one but his August Sovereign, himself, and me). There was another great outburst at the phrase about the American children sharing their bread so that a Belgian child should not feel forgotten, and at the period about the King they all arose and there was frenzied tumult and cries of "*Vive le Roi!*"

At the peroration there were tears and at the end another great manifestation, such as I have never had before and shall never have, I suppose, again. Then Van Vollenhoven made his brief speech—and it was over, and deputies and ministers were crowding around with congratulations. In a great room behind the Chamber there was an enormous buffet, and more crowdings and more congratulations from every one while I got a cup of tea. It was very beautiful, very touching, gratifying, and pleasing—a perfect recompense, showing that Belgians are grateful, and know how to express their gratitude. What greater honour could man have than to be thus acclaimed by the united representatives of a whole nation! It was overwhelming. I was quite overcome. Villiers congratulated me warmly, so did the Cardinal, so did everybody.