

December 23, 1918.—A note from d'Arschot to tell me that the King wished to see me—this evening at six o'clock at the Palace—a frock coat requested.

At six, then, or ten minutes before, I drove once more through the gilded grill at the diplomatic entrance, and across the inner court. I waited a moment in the hall, where several footmen were, then was shown to a large room (where there was a beautiful model of a steamship), then an officer, young with a black patch on one eye, came and showed me into the next room where stood the King.

He was in frock coat this afternoon and received me most cordially. In the centre of the room was a desk, almost as heavily loaded with papers as mine, and he sat down there, placing a seat for me beside his desk. He was looking exceedingly well, very ruddy and fit, and it was good to see him "in civil" again: he looks big and very handsome in a frock coat.

He began by telling me of his pleasure in my speech in the Chamber the other day, thanked me for it and for my reference to him. Then he spoke of his pleasure in the coming of the President—it was that visit, I fancy, that was the cause of his sending for me. He said that he wished to go to the frontier to meet the President and I told him that I wished to do the same. "Then we will go together," he said. Unfortunately I had no knowledge whatever of the President's intention, no hint, not a word, as to when he was coming. I felt embarrassed by the fact, and I did not like to tell His Majesty that as I was the American minister I would be the last one, naturally, to be informed.

The King talked much about the President and of his liking for him and said that he wished Belgium to turn as much as possible toward America. "I like Anglo-Saxon institutions: you have liberty and authority." . . .

He spoke of his admiration for the American troops. He had seen them at Audenarde; he had shaken hands and talked with them. "They are fine, big men!" he said, "they are clean and they have good manners: they are intelligent, and know what they are fighting for, I asked them. The only objection I found was that when they shook my hand they squeezed it too tight—my hand is sore still." And he laughed and held up his hand ruefully. He admired the Californians: "I felt small beside them. One is glad to have them as Allies; one would not like to have them as enemies."

From time to time we reverted to the President's trip and I told him that America would like to have him visit her shores again. He blushed deeply, with pleasure, and said that he would like to go, and spoke indeed as if he would go.

"I can't make speeches like you," he said, "I am, how do you say it?—I am a simple man."

He described his recent trip to Dinant; said that he liked to see and mingle with the people—was indignant over the atrocities there; wished the President to see it and to see the ruined factories.

He said that this was the day of democracy, all the kings and monarchs on the other side of the Rhine are off their thrones, their countries have collapsed. Of the Kaiser he said: "He must have been very badly advised; if he had known in 1914 what he knows now, he never would have begun the war." . . .

He spoke much of democracy; has no fear of it and wishes to be of the people. I told him that he should go often among them. Of universal suffrage he said: "Some of the bourgeoisie criticize me for

supporting it. They say if you give the domestic one vote and the master one vote, the domestic will have as much influence as the master. I say, if that is the case, the master doesn't amount to very much as a man, with all his means of influencing people.... The man on the bridge"—he touched his own broad breast—"must look farther ahead than those in the hold." I told him that discussions of universal suffrage were amusing to me—that seemed so obvious, so inevitable....

I told him that he should see American newspapers, with their ignoble sensations, their unbridled licence, their prying into every closet in the land. But he said that it was good in the long run; it let in the light. He spoke with contempt of the Paris newspapers....

He regrets La Panne, where he is going for Christmas. The Queen is there. "The air is better down there," he said, with a gesture that indicated the wide sweep of the ocean. He spoke of the ceremonials, so very heavy, of his court before the war. "We must change that," he said. Evidently he regrets the burden of his life at La Panne. "But there is no escape. Life is a struggle," he said.

"When there are any Americans of interest here," he said, "let me know; we'll have a little dinner. I like them. When I talk to an American I feel better, more optimistic. You are a younger, stronger people, not so cynical as the Europeans."