

Sunday, June 26, 1921.—At five with Crocroft and Wilson to the reception given me by the Grand Serment Royal de St. Georges, as Member of Honour. The “locale” of this Society, like the locale of most “*sociétés*,” is behind a beer-garden, but it is a curious, ancient place, “*dans le bas de la ville*,” the very heart of old Brussels. They had hung out the Belgian and American flags, and had a red carpet down across the pavement, and we were met by a committee in evening dress, with decorations, conducted through an old cabaret, through a beer-garden, to a long building in the rear, where, around the walls, on which dusty trophies were hung, with the ancient cross-bows of the members, the society, in black coats, were assembled. Their “King” was there, wearing the great gold chain of his office, and addressed scrupulously as “*Sa Majesté*”—he called me “*Mon Excellence*.” A gilt and red fauteuil was set out for us, and the President read an address of welcome, to which I read a response. Then Ansbach, one of the Common Council of Brussels, made a speech to which I responded, improvised this time. Then I signed my name in the golden book on a paper especially illuminated for me, and then they gave an exhibition of shooting with the cross-bow. They asked me to have a try, and I ventured; it is a monstrous, heavy weapon; and my first shot was in the target, but my second hit the bull’s eye—“*j’ai mis dans la rose*,” as they say. There was much applause and great enthusiasm;

many felicitations, and shaking hands all around; and I had to be photographed with the target, and then sign my name to it, so that they might keep it as a souvenir. They proposed that I try again, but I declined, thinking it wise to let well enough alone. After that, there was the ceremony of drinking beer—the sickening “lambit” of Brussels, which I tasted—it is nasty stuff; Baudelaire said that it tasted like beer that had already been drunk, “*ça goutte comme de la bière qu’on a déjà bus.*” There were more moving pictures, more felicitations, shaking of hands, and I left, conducted to my motor by the committee in full evening dress.

The whole thing is typically Bruxellois; the President read his speech in the rich Bruxellois accent, and pinned the insignia of the guild on my breast. They are simple, kindly folk; and this society has an uninterrupted history of nearly six centuries, having been founded in 1382. It is a survival of the old guilds, and was, in its day, one of the companies of cross-bowmen that hardily defended the liberties of the city. Now they shoot at a target—for the beer!

Every one is excited over the Dempsey-Carpentier fight, which is to take place next Saturday.¹ The French are, of course, sure that their man will win. Below stairs a continual war goes on between Charles, the chef, and Jules, the footman, on the one hand, they both being French, and Marie, Nell’s maid, who is strongly pro-American, and other of the other servants, on the other hand. The betting at home is four to one on Dempsey, who should win, and I hope that he will.

¹ Jack Dempsey had won the heavyweight championship in 1919 from Jess Willard. He was now being challenged by Georges Carpentier of France in what Tex Rickard called “the battle of the century.”