

December 24, 1921.—Christmas Eve! The event of our day was the visit of the King, who came promptly at five, accompanied by an aide, Major Van du Stratten. We had the red carpet laid, and all the servants in line, and Nell and I went to the door to receive His Majesty as he alighted from his motor. He was in uniform with the ribbons of his American decoration, the only ones he wore. Nell made her reverence, and I my bow and we conducted him to the middle salon, the house being now half bare, and desolate. But that salon remained almost intact, and we had put some flowers about so that it wasn't too bad. His Majesty sat on

the sofa, and Nell and I in chairs beside him. Van du Stratten sat stiffly in a corner. The conversation was, of course, about our going. His Majesty expressing his regret and thanking me many times for my service to his country. He spoke of this over and over; and begged me to come back; said that he would always consider me as a friend. It was really saddening to realize that the time had actually come when this interesting relation was at an end; we have been real friends; he has always talked to me so frankly, unreservedly, and I do like him. I tried to tell him so; told him that I was always ready to serve him.

The conversation drifted then to many other subjects. He said that he could not understand why America changed their diplomats when they were at a post where they were liked, and which they knew and understood. "Your husband," he said to Nell, "knows Belgium better than most Belgians."

He peered about the room and said, "This is a nice house, it is owned by the state, of course?" And we had to explain that it wasn't, and he said that that was hard to understand, too. States should own their Embassies and Legations, he said, "not only for the convenience of their representatives, but for the prestige of the state; it is well to have the embassy known, to identify it with the nation it represents."

And so on to the trip in America, of which he recalled many incidents and many persons. New York, he said, was the most interesting place in America, and the most impressive. He spoke of the impression made by the mass of the skyscrapers, that of "an harmonious ensemble." (He spoke a good deal of French today, more than usual.) He recalled too, his reception at New York, and the extraordinary effect of the shower of paper in "Broad Street," as he said. . . .

He spoke of the difficulties of forming the new government, and was very high in his praise of Theunis. We talked, too, of the Washington Conference, of the row between the English and the French, and with a kind of malicious twinkle he spoke of Viviani as not popular at Washington. We talked too of the Congo, whither he contemplates going again, with the Queen this time, and of Africa and its fascination. He told me of his journey this autumn when he visited Algiers and Morocco.

When he rose to go he said that he wished again to express his regret at our going, his gratitude for my services, and so on. It was then that I told him that I should always be glad to serve him

with the loyalty and devotion of one of his own subjects; that he could call on me as such. And he said with his quiet smile, "I should call on you as a friend." We thanked him and assured him of our appreciation of the honour of his visit, and I repeated my feeling of devotion to his person. He gave his hand to Nell, and when she had made her curtsy, he kissed her hand. We chatted in the hall while the servants were helping him on with his overcoat, and he said that he and the Queen wished me to go to Laeken next week. We went with him to his motor. He remained here three-quarters of an hour. It is the only time the King has ever called at an Embassy or Legation in Brussels.

Christmas Eve! Could one but feel again some of the old witching magic of this hour, this season! *Ay di mi!*