



October 14

We have come to a pretty pass here, at last Panic has set in. What a contrast to the behaviour of the troops at the outset of the war! All young men between the ages of 18 and 30 commenced to stampede yesterday and are still continuing their exodus. The four "beauties" under my roof left this morning about 5 o'clock on an aimless route. All youths capable of carrying a gun!

Sons, who escaped military service as only sons of widowed mothers – young husband, all are saving their skins regardless of the fate of their womenfolk. Why? Because the German intimidation tactics are beginning to tell.

These heroic youths have a fear of being taken and made to serve by the Germans or be sent into captivity. There seems to be no sort of order, or discipline, on the merest hearsay, gleaned from irresponsible folk, panic is spread.

Today, as I write – about 11:00 o'clock am – the first sounds of distant cannon have been heard. Alarmists declare they heard the same yesterday. It is said that the Germans are at [Assbrouk] – a village about five miles away – why then are our troops hastening in the opposite direction? Matters, I think would be different, had we a man like General Leman, or M. Max, the Burgomaster of Brussels at our head

Some youths there are, who have left with the fond idea, that they will get to England and be taken as soldiers by the English, and this, on the strength of the latest rumours! What could England do with such material, youths who have shown as an initiative, the "white feathers" in their own country? There must be some modelling somewhere, but it does not surprise me I was quite ready for it. I am so beside myself with contempt at the action of the young men of the town especially those, who I have housed and fed and tried to educate, that I am quite unfit for work

4:00 o'clock pm

At last, we have a few of the invaders, orderly enough folk to look at, and surprisingly smart, despite the pouring rain, and the mud they must pass through. A company of infantry have just passed, singing quite beautifully in parts, keeping time to the tramp of their feet. The sentries posted at the corners of the streets, seem kindly fellows, saluting all who pass in a cheery way, fraternising with the children especially.

A squadron of cavalry – Uhlans I think – have just passed in fine order, well mounted and looking as though they had just come out of barracks. They certainly are fine, and well disciplined troops.

As I write night is drawing in, and still cavalry, infantry and cyclists followed by ambulance wagons are surging past so I conclude there will be no occupation "en masse" in the town tonight.

Oct. XV

There are all sorts of rumours about, that the Burgomaster had satisfied the demands of the German Commander. Rumours however are so many and fantastic that it is impossible to put faith in anything one hears. The Flemings if not imaginative are at least adept at invention and excellent spreaders of "tittle tattle".

My house is full of fugitive women and children, all neighbours, with good houses yet they refuse to respond to their menfolk! Ere to return, so I suppose I shall have them for the night. Oh! The babble of their tongues, all talking at same time, at the top of their voices as is the Flemish custom. No one listening. The only reasonable creature is the baby, who calmly sleeps despite the din around. Aure is kind and bountiful to children. I have attempted several times during the day to go out but each attempt has been frustrated by lamentation and prayer to remain so I am most reluctantly losing all "the fun of the town" and besides I am in imperfect ignorance of all that is passing therein. I have never before witnessed such abject fear as that being displayed all around me. S attempted to while away a few moments at my piano, but I was begged to desist, lest the Germans should hear. I am in a back room be it said whence no sound and possibly reach the street.

I was a fool for my pains to stand by, when I might have quite easily have left with the females, for the male contingent of my household had no thought of them or me the moment they apprehended danger, so I find myself left as a sort of guardian of women, most garrulous, maidens hysterical, and badly brought up children – a nice Pandemonium!

If I come out of this safely, I shall know how to act for the future, and I am not sure but that I shall make new plans for the ending of my days somewhere else. I am anything but predisposed towards a continuance of my present life, or rather, for the resumption of life amongst folk who I have learnt to detest and despise.

It is computed, that at least 100,000 troops have passed through since yesterday, and still they come. Some pass on, many remain. I am inclined to believe the estimate for I have watched the continual stream until tired and then others have watched, and reported to me.

Oct. XVI

We have arrived at the ["Comble"] of desolation, despite the increase of population caused by the military avalanche of Germans who have arrived during the past two days. Up till now, I am bound to say that good order has prevailed, as far as I have been able to observe or to hear. In my house, I have a man, and in the stable two horses billeted upon me. The man seems to be a good fellow of the peasant type and gives no trouble, indeed he makes friends with the children, who he says remind him of his own, far away in Posen. He is evidently a driver of a commissariat wagon for he brings all sorts of things edible and freely offers them and makes no demand either for food or drink and even declines when offered, saying that he

is well supplied. He has a firm belief that the whole war is the fault of the English, and I have no doubt that this idea has been thoroughly driven into him, as into the rest of the troops.

This morning early, one of the horses billeted in the stable of very small shopkeeper opposite, who had fled with his family, died and was dragged out into the street, where it has remained without – four o'clock – they're being apparently no matter, and the Germans taking the steps

A man has just applied here for permission to haul the dead animal into my stable to flay it – luckily my stable was already under requisition, so my prompt refusal was strengthened, otherwise the brute would certainly have foisted upon me the carcass and saved himself the cost of transport – Bruges all over! The dead animal has been dragged away to a neighbouring, and now a liberal distribution of looted sweetstuffs, the contents of my neighbour's shop, is proceeding to the women, boys, children of the adjacent streets. Oh! these Brugeois! They are little better than beasts of prey. Think of it! Wwomen and children, gloating over the sacking of their fellow townsman's hard gotten goods. In the street women, young girls and even men fraternising with the enemy's soldiers whilst their younger men and youths have taken to their heels through sheer fright. These are the countrymen of those who fell heroically at Louvain, [?Namur] and other towns and battles, at the outset of the invasion!

I have just heard the flight of the burger master sound on Friday with his secretary the governor of Bruges is still at his parents for I have just seen us

Your good son Louis has just been to see how matters were with me as we had not seen one another since Sunday, when he and Mr [?Mackelson] dined and spent the day here. It was a plucky act on his part, and I was much moved by it. I explained to him, as I have to you, why I had not been able to leave my house. A All was well with him until now, he has had no Germans at the nursery.

6 o'clock

An exodus seems to be proceeding. Wagons troops cannon and cavalry are passing continually, making their way, it is said, towards Ostend. Towards Ostend. The man and the two horses with me left hurriedly, two hours ago, and have not yet returned. I hope they have gone for good

Later

There is quite a lull now in the street. Everybody has to be within doors at 7 o'clock. My visitors have not returned so I conclude they have left for good.

Pillage is still going on over the way. Terror as I said earlier is having its effect. The people still look on at such a spectacle, as I have described, literally afraid to protest for fear of reprisals. A brave fellow, a brewer – M. Vaneste – on the opposite side of the way, has just sent over a man to repair the broken stable door and has threatened to report the whole matter

to officers he has in his house. It is to be hoped they will punish the barbarian, and that those who participated in the looting will be degraded from citizenship, and held up to scorn by their fellow townsmen and women.

I could not have believed such a filthy orgy possible, had I not witnessed it with my own eyes. Alas! For the poor shopkeeper, the intervention has come to late. I fear his shop is completely gutted and I doubt not but that his household effects have been pillaged by the vermin of Bruges, and all because his house was found closed and deserted.

The devout are still assiduous in the churches, and stations of pilgrimage, with their prayers. Oh! What a beautiful thing is faith. It allows people to suffer and still to pray, and suffer over again, always inherent in Hope, and that Hope always deferred, yet their hearts do not seem to sicken. I have long since lost the power to pray, and the longer I see suffering and the bloody deeds of mankind, the further I am driven from any belief in the efficacy of Prayer.

I am bound to confess that so far, I consider the grossest misdeeds too have been perpetrated by the inhabitants themselves. The soldiery seem orderly enough; black sheep there must always be in an invading army, and the man who originated the pillage of my neighbour's house is probably one of them. The townsfolk however, who took advantage of his lead, are to my thinking, the vilest of the vile. Oh Bruges! I am sorry for your ignorant lower classes.

But Bruges, you are yourself responsible, in that you keep them ignorant and teach them obedience to the Church, and even feed them at your Convent doors on receipt of certificates of good attendance at the Mass and at Confession but you seem powerless to instil into them the great teaching of the blessed Prince of your Hierarchy. The greatest blackguards will leave their orgies in the adjacent drink hovels, to cringe and crawl before the illshapen doll like images carried in a so called sacred procession, this passed, back they will go to their sordid cups, feeling doubtless free to begin afresh, having done homage.

Next, they will be shriven, then to their boorish ways again, until a new chance of remission is at hand, so the lives of the ignorant wag on, and the Church waxes fat and ever more powerful.

Oct. XVII

The night has been quiet, except the constant passage of troops, evidently advancing upon Ostend. The threatened new invasion has as yet not begun, and this one can only surmise because those still about are all men of the Landswehr, whereas those expected, are all young levies and I see none of them about.

1 o'clock.

It is to be hoped that we have now seen the last of troops going westwards, for news has just come of a crushing defeat of the enemy somewhere in France and near the Belgian frontiers.

We may then, if the news be true, expect to see the rush of retreating soldiers instead of any further advance of confident bullies. Possibly this incursion may be more harmful, through very rage and despair. We shall see, and the news has brought courage in my household so I may possibly find means to sally forth in quest of information.

Later

The good news of a victory over the enemy has had no confirmation so far, but if the hurry to and fro of officers in motorcars, on horseback, and on foot means anything, it is that something of importance is happening. The hope is great, but the suspense, and uncertainty is most heart-sickening. We have been without any news of the outside world for a week now. No papers appear and no letters arrive. -During the last few days meat, and fish have become scarce owing doubtless to the enormous levies made by the enemy. Certain sorts of tobacco, especially cigarettes, are unobtainable, and despite the prohibition of the sale of spirituous liquors, there is evidently a good amount being consumed. The other night in one of the lower class cafes near here, dancing was being freely indulged in, the women dancing with the troops. One case I have just heard of, was of a mother dancing with a trooper while her deserted child is following them crying. The father arrives and endeavours to take his wife away, but is himself expelled with threats by the brutal soldiery..

The police have naturally become even more of a cipher than they were in calmer times. They still swagger about but they have no authority. This is not a very great change, for even in peacetime the police of Bruges are mere comic opera officials.

The Gendarmerie barracks has been backed and I believe much damage done to furniture and family effects of the m

There is some talk of the chimes in the Belfry being altered to German national air is, but as yet, I have only heard the familiar tunes as usual, show the news of a victory proved to, they will assuredly be some chiming, such as Bruges has not heard from many a long year. I wonder whether a rendering of God save the King, the Marseillaise and the Russian national anthem will be tempted.

This morning at about six o'clock the outgoing soldiers marched, singing the "Wacht am Rhein" and the effect was most impressive, and had a touch of sadness, which pierced one's heart, for instinctively one thought of the fathers, brothers and relatives of families in Rhineland, marching to their deaths, and all the suffering and anguish of those poor creatures about to become the victims to a vast and devastating ambition, left behind.

I daresay you are witnessing many a sad and heartrending sight in England, but beyond the preparation for combat you are spared the turmoil of actual hostility in its active form..

It may seem strange to you, but I assure you the effect of all this warlike activity seems to excite a feverish desire to be amongst the combatants, and the forced inactivity as far as I am

personally concerned, is making me quite ill. I long to finger a rifle and kill something, like the British sportsman who is reported to have said to a fellow "the weather is fine, let's out to kill something." I am quite sure the horrors of war, or as intensely degrading to the peaceful, as they are to the warlike. The intimacy which it brings about between the peaceful citizen and the deeds of the warrior is prone to engender a disregard for bloodshed, whether through war, or murder and even for sudden death. No nation can be the better for such terrible influences as war brings about, even though its cause has been victorious. If it is true that the facial expressions caused by crying, and laughing are similar, then the joy of victory must resemble the lamentation of defeat, and man is no better off as far as his power of facial expression is concerned as a victor than is his vanquished foe. The one can only brag of what he has done while the other laments his failure. In any case lamentation is the only fruit of war.

The day before yesterday, during a momentary lull of some heavy artillery, in front of this house a small street urchin ran out from the crowded pavement towards a cannon and on tip-toe attempted to look into the muzzle to the great amusement of the gunners. It was a wonderful contrast between grim war and infantile "nonchalance".

4 o'clock

No news as yet of a general retirement of troops, on the contrary, a report is now going around of a further arrival and already the houses are being marked for billeting. I hope we shall escape, though I fear there is very little chance.

I had intended to sally forth to St Andre, but with this new threat hanging over us. I feel I must stop at home for I cannot well leave the women and children alone.

This is a very long letter, but before I have done with it, it will be very much longer. I promised to keep you informed of the doings here during your absence, and as long as there means of conveying letters to you. I have taken advantage of them. I am now keeping this sort of journal in order that, as soon as communication is opened again with England, you may learn from it all that has passed during the break in my correspondence.

I was much pleased with your letters which your son Louis handed to me yesterday, and your account of your grandchild's doings with "sticks and clay. I have no doubt that she inherits her father's love of art, and I hope you will encourage it, especially if you see that she has his very extraordinary gift of observation and love of Nature. You should encourage her to invent as well as to copy. Invention nowadays is so little cultivated and is so rarer gift, that it should be encouraged in every way. The father possessed the faculty in an extraordinary degree, while having the power to express his view of what he saw without slavishly copying any fact. Therein lay his strength and great promise. The great thing is to keep all hideous sights from the child's view and to encourage her to revel in such beauties of form and colour as you can well place before her in your hot houses. Talk to her of the wonderful transformations which you by your Art are able to encourage Nature to perform.

Tell her what the insects do for the plant in their wild forest homes. Excite her imagination by stories of how Nature sometimes helps flowers and plants and even trees to protect themselves against enemies. How they will languish for want of care, just as children will, and how they thrive and flourish in response to careful tending. Tell her too of their sensitiveness to warmth and cold, to wounds and caresses She will of her own accord know of the joy they bring to man, through her own delight in them. I am convinced that the influence of the beauty lying hid in plant forms and in flowers of every kind, is still in its infancy, as far as the World of Art is concerned, and the world of men and women is only half aware of the true significance of the great lesson. Many men collect and prize botanical forms simply on account of their rarity and give little thought to their beauty and the teaching they convey. When I was a child my father endeavoured to instil into me a love for flowers and plants, but, alas! the brutalities of a public school life ridiculed any such tendency as effeminate. Happily, however, I harboured in secret a love for such things and now I am grateful to my father for his early teaching. To me a flower is "a thing of beauty and a joy for ever". I remember a beautiful lawn we had. It became the despair of our gardener on account of the daisies which my mother and father allowed to encroach upon it, my mother saying that the daisies were the jewels and the grass their setting. My father, however, was ruthless with his spud upon other growths, explaining that beauty should always be encouraged but ugliness, and the ruthless greed of rank weeds exterminated. I am afraid he would be considered as a dangerous heretic by most gardeners, on the strength of his views about daisies on a lawn.

7pm

I have just returned from a short vigil at the window. Things seem to be quieting down, though soldiers are passing every moment in groups of two, three, and four, and at rare intervals heavy wagons lumber past. Our visitor has just returned but without his horses, having found quarters for them at the cavalry barracks. I am rather thankful that he is coming here to sleep tonight, as his presence may save us from other, and less welcome, guests.

The man is evidently sad and it is quite touching to have the little touches of thoughtful consideration, which no doubt thoughts of his own family far away prompt him to show. He has just brought us a packet of powdered chocolate, and some preparation of preserved milk also in powder, which is apparently served out to the soldiers. The poor fellow was full of expressions of regret at the terrible war, and longings to get to his home. He has probably heard nothing of the reported reverses, or, if he has, he is naturally guarded against uttering a word on the subject.

It is evidently his notion that the occupation of Bruges will last at least three weeks longer, and then all troops will be moved on to occupy Paris, England seems to be also a possible goal for he asked as to the strength the army there. I gathered from certain hints he let drop that all the troops here are mad with the Kaiser.

It is most tantalising to be without news, the suspense is awful, and to think that we are likely to have it suffer it for a long time still, sickening. There can be no fighting going on near here, or we should see signs, through the ambulance wagons. I can only surmise that a great concentration is taking place on the Belgian frontier as a support to the troops in France. I dread to think of a sudden retreat "en masse", for we here must inevitably suffered the brunt of it and there's no telling how far the lawlessness of retreatind and beaten army may be carried.

7.30

As no further news has come in, I begin to doubt the truth of the news I had earlier in the day, and I shall go to bed as usual in dread uncertainty for the night, and the morrow. I am half inclined to sit up the night, as it is already rather chilly, and we are short of fuel & a bed seems to me to be the best place, if only to keep warm, for mental anguish in the cold is physical suffering aggravated and it is essential that physical being should nursed at present to strengthen mental power, which is absolutely necessary under the present conditions.

I was a boy of seventeen, at the period of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 and I can well remember the tensions which lack of news caused, and how anxiously one looked for the various editions of the daily papers. I realise now, to the full, in the present absence of news, what the extent of anxiety must have been at that time, though then of course I could not understand as fully the eagerness of everyone to get a newspaper, I would give much for one at the present moment.

The Germans seem to be determined to keep prices down, as an instance just given me by my housekeeper. It appears that a peasant- one of the few in the marketplace- was demanding five francs a kilo for butter when a bystanding soldier intervened and told that, if she did not sell for two francs, her whole stock would be confiscated. I was the gainer by this little affair for my housekeeper promptly bought what she required. It is strange, and seems almost inconsistent, but the enemy who is none too nice when looting is concerned, should be so watchful of the grasping of our own folk. Possibly some fear of a possible famine is being held in view, and then the necessity of supplying food from the military stores, to a starving population. Meat, vegetables, and even bread, are getting scarce, but potatoes are easily obtainable at no appreciable advance in price. Coal is being charged two francs the sack, an advance of over 70 centimes in the ordinary price. It is only obtainable in small quantities, so what will happen when the really cold weather sets in, one dreads to think of,, and as to the very poor, they will simply have to go without. Iit is to be hoped, however, that we shall be relieved, before such an extremity comes about.

Oct. XVIII Sunday

I have to confess a fault , which I have not been guilty of for many years; lying abed till 10 o'clock; it being Sunday has had nothing to do with this unusual indulgence. I can only attribute the fact to sheer fatigue, for I slept soundly, and might have continued to do so, but for an extraordinary rumbling, which literally shook me awake. Thus I awoke from the most refreshing sleep and pleasant dreams to the stern reality of brutal materialism.

One continuous stream of heavy vehicles was surging past, and apparently had been doing so for some time before it disturbed my heavy sleep. I am a light sleeper, as a rule, and an early riser, and any excess of my usual quantum of sleep, generally renders me unfit for the rest of the day, but somehow, on this occasion it has had quite the contrary effect, indeed I feel quite brutal, and I have upon me that savage desire, which possessed me two days ago, to handle a rifle and slay. It is a hateful feeling, and I shall attempt presently to busy my brain and my hands with their accustomed occupation, and thus try to forget all that is going on around..

2pm

During the morning, we have had comparative calm, and from 10 o'clock till now, one might have fancied oneself in the heart of the City of London, on Sunday morning but now the whirl of vehicles, tramp of feet, andc latter of hoofs has begun again. I cannot help thinking that Bruges is being used as a base, and depot, and this being the case, we may look to a permanent military occupation until some serious check occurs.

I have just noticed that the infantry are all in campaign dress, and that the different detachments are accompanied by wagons laden with knapsacks, and other paraphernalia: and as though the Earth around was incapable of furnishing room enough for movement, the Air too is becoming alive with aeroplanes. This looks like serious business at last.

One is lost in amazement at the interminable flow of armed humanity, and at the power of discipline, exercised by a few leading lights over such masses. The organisation must be stupendous and it points to years of preparation for the minutest detail appears to have been well planned and brought to perfection. The troops present no appearance of fatigue, or of having been on the war trail for weeks; all are spick and span, the horses in excellent condition, and well and carefully groomed, the harness like new and every man beautifully shod in splendid boots, no untidy gaiters, and ungainly superfluties. The helmets have weather covers, as though to protect them against the time when they will be required to appear at some grand review after manoeuvres are over.

The impression gained is rather one of awe than of terror, for it is hard to realise that these thousands of men and horses are really marching to battle and to Death, attired as they are for a grand parade. The physique too, or both horses and men, is quite extraordinary. No weeds in the harvest! Thus far. I believe we have only seen the Landwehr, what have we in store when the regular army of young levies comes on the scen

The unseemly behaviour of Bruges women and girls is still going on. Dancing is in full swing again today in some of the lower class of cafes. Most of these women must have near relatives fighting and probably many are dying at this very moment, while the unthinking and unfeeling females are hard clasped in the lewd and unhallowed embrace of some son of the Enemy. A veritable dance of death! Now, one would think, is no time for such indecent orgies and disgust chokes me with impotent rage against such inhuman animals. I can call them by no other name.

Love of cheap finery and course junketing is characteristic of the lower class of learning to day, just as it was in the days of David Jenners, and others of the Dutch painters who have degraded their art, by lending it to the representation scenes of debauchery and characteristic of their times and their rents.

In the great War of 1870, which is on record that women who thus demeaned themselves disappear, and at the end of hostilities, all trace of them lots it is suppose that they were ruthlessly disposed of in moments of rage, Shame and anguish by them very relative happily, a veil has been drawn over this hideous picture though there exist faces, and hints in literature of the time, and a little after which point to the more probable truth of the assertion. .

I can't imagine why the authorities tolerate such abodes of abomination in this town, which is above all others, the supposed hotbed of religious fanaticis..One would **expect** a more rigourous suppression, more especially as the party in power is that which represents the Church. It is a fantastic sight, that of streams of devout pilgrims wending their way in prayer while another crowd of pleasure seekers passes on their way to gross enjoyment of licentious liberty. Pauvre Humanite!

5pm

I have snatched a short of time from my watching, and spent it in my studio trying to forget, and to forgive. I find it hard to do either, when on returning to my place of observation, I see what is going on in street. The women and girls seem to be devoid of even the rudimentary sense of shame which possessed Eve after she had eaten the apple; their dress appears to me to be more undress than was the rudimentary covering of the Mother of Man. Her primitive covering was an admission of a sense of nudity while the super abundance of clothing of doubtful taste is a mere invitation to lewd andvulgar speculation. I have never seen so many overdressed females look less covered as I have seen in these days, and I realise now, more than ever, what a shameless worthless jade is Goddess Fashion. . It is quite a relief to see now and again some old Flemish woman pass with her picturesque cloak and clean white cap. As to the men - mostly peasants in the tawdry imitative disguise of their betters - I leave them aside for their very gait and manners show that they are not men after William of Wykeham's idea, but merely clowns and "clodhoppers".

It is for these beastly people that this dire bloodshed is going on! Are they after all worth the independence very enjoy - or did enjoy – untaught, unrestrained, ignorant, arrogant and brutal? I can't believe it. New paragraph.

Nor can I believe that the violation of Belgian territory is any more actually than a plausible pretext for England to have [a go?] at Germany. I have been accused of being pro-German, that I am certainly not. War had to come sometime or other between England and Germany, and the present time was more propitious than another latter period for England. To an outside onlooker like myself, it seems extraordinary that more energetic steps, at the commencement, and more determined effort now, should be entirely lacking in the programme of defence of the violated neutrality of a country which depended, as Belgium did, upon the protection of England and France, Germany has certainly violated her treaty, but neither England nor France have been able to keep their part in time. The whole affair presents itself to me, very much in the light of shutting the stable door when the horses have fled, and turning upon the pig with intent to slay for venturing to intrude in the unprotected stable. I am no politician, however, and I must not air my ignorance of statecraft, but I may be permitted to say what I think, and that it is a game like any other.

In the great struggle, I am naturally biased in favour of my own country, but when I reflect seriously, I cannot help, as a man, sympathising with the suffering of the enemy, while I may long for, and applaud the prowess of my own countrymen. I deplore the whole business the more so that it should be possible for such brutality to exist in our so-called enlightened era. My firm conviction is, that the time has come when the wings of inordinate ambition should be clipped, and used to decorate the huge crowns hung up in future in Museums, as trophies of a conquered bacillus of the most fatal and obnoxious genus. The other bacilli of a less enterprising activity, such as Republics, may well be left to the tender mercies of those who prefer and tolerate **them**. They have always sufficient length of rope around their necks to hang themselves with should they fall far enough, in attempting too great a climbing.

The danger of hereditary monarchy, is the blood feud of inheritance. An elected life ruler, did he suffer from a superabundance of veritable spleen, would take it with him, to his grave instead of handing it on to his successors as an embarrassing extra/contribution to a most noxious human possession, in the form of a n honourable birthright, to be still increased, according to the power of inflation of the individual so burdened.

I have no intention to suggest that Kings of their own accord, make wars nowadays, though the wars are always made in the name and under their direct august patronage. Their plea of innocence is much upon the same level as that advanced by the trumpeter of ancient time- I think at the battle of Phassalia – who when taken prisoner pleaded for his life on the score that he had taken no active part in the fighting. No! Said his captors but you have incited your fellows, by the blasts from your trumpet, and thus your part is less

glorious that theirs, since they have fought and died while you have rendered yourself responsible for their death, by only blowing through a trumpet, to excite their wrath, and incite valliance in them which you did not possess yourself.

Oct XIX

During the night there has been great movement of troops and wagons, and now this morning all, has calmed down again. The electric tram has begun service again, and it is quite a relief to see this sign of a return to civilised peace.

A German soldier has just told my housekeeper that there has been a terrible battle, somewhere between Ostend and Thouzout, and that the scole normale here is full of wounded brought in during the night.

Apparently the English have been engaged, and the hatred and execration experienced against England, is beyond description

It appears that the move on the part of the Germans was to force a way to Calais, and this has been momentarily frustrated, hence the rage.

- Another horse has just been shot under one of my windows, it had fallen while dragging in a team a very heavy van: it seemed unable to get up so it was promptly shot. Women and children are looking on at the bleeding corpse, and at the decapitation taking place. I suppose it will be skinned where it lies. Some people take their pleasures in odd ways, and it seems that the gruesome is in especial favour here. I have noticed at the picture gallery of the Academy, that the greatest attraction is offered by a celebrated but brutal picture, representing the flaying alive of a man! A popular amusement among children, is to capture cockchafers when "in season" and fly them as kites, having attached a piece of cotton or thread to their legs. Another favourite pastime, is to ill-treat dogs by making them draw overladen carts. Sometimes the load is added to by a burly ruffian, too lazy to walk. It is a common sight to see horses totally unfit for work still forced to drag burdens above their strength. All this in peacetime. No wonder then that now unsavoury sights should be attractive, and that children enured to them grow up brutes. If the horrors of Louvain and elsewhere are specimens of German culture, most apt pupils will be found here, should annexation take place.

1 o'clock

Oh! That terrible tramp of feet, now again a whole regiment has passed apparently in orderly retreat, for it is the same which passed on Thursday, heading towards Ostend, today it is coming from there. Can this mean a retirement of the survivors of the great battle? Carts laden with rifles, helmets, knapsacks are in company, and led horses of officers are in abundance. The men are marching in good order, as a rule four a-breast, but they have a

downcast and weary appearance. There is no sign as yet of the young troops, all these men are of the Landwehr and I recognise several officers who passed by on Thursday last "en route" for Ostend. One riderless horse I recognised, it is a splendid animal, a grey, and of English breed, for that matter. The majority of the horses are of the same breed. It is notorious that for years past, the Germans have been buying English and Irish horses, especially mares. They certainly seem to have the pick of horseflesh and of a stamp most suitable for warlike purposes, heavy draught and saddle work.

What beats my comprehension, and excites my admiration, is the wonderful order and cleanliness of the men when on the march. Now and again one sees a dirty fellow or two, but their look is soon accounted for by the appearance of a farrier's wagon, or some other vehicle, denoting a trade at which it is impossible to keep clean. The daily scene here would constitute a liberal education in things military, were the interest not marred by the suggestion of brutal force and legitimised rapine and murder. I can only liken the whole effect to the fabled fascination of the Gorgon's head of ancient myth. Othe Gorgon's head of ancient myth. One cannot tear oneself away, and one's whole being becomes as stone, at the sight of the alluring beauty of powerful organisation and discipline.

Think what all this energy would mean if only directed towards peaceful occupations! Alas! for the waste and the ruthless squander life, energy, intelligence and all for the grasping after additional prestige and world power. A veritable hecatomb a thousand times repeated for the vain glory of an individual, backed by his sycophants. I am not blaming especially the Kaiser and his war party. If he and they were not doing these things of horror some other warlord would be. Iso happened that the Kaiser is for the time being in evidence, and so he has to bear the brunt of execration of those pitted against him.

Just one hundred years ago, Germany was fighting shoulder to shoulder with England to subdue the greatest Caesar the world has ever seen. France was the execrated country and Napoleon the Ogre who led it. Today the eagle of France rides on the back of the British lion to overcome Prussian eagle! – and the Russian double headed bird of prey horses around intent upon exterminating his single headed neighbour. What will come next? The world would seem to be fond of eagles, since the bloodthirsty bird has the so generally taken as a cognizance by Nations. Even peace loving America has fancied the bird. The lion and the bear seem to be less thought of by new formed states. The Crescent may still have a day in store for it – but when will the Cross prevail once and for all? Pauvre Humanite! it is but a grasping, grinding, fighting machine after all. The name of God, and his special protection, is equally invoked by each and every bloodthirsty miscreant who owns him as their Deity, whether he be in the right or not. Allah has a turn now and again, but it seems to me that the Devil governs the Universe, leaving God to be kind to those he loves. One is almost tempted to think that the Devil has come to his own again through these days of Desolation.

2 o'clock

The poor horse summarily shot this morning has been sold for 12 francs, it has been bled where it lay, and the children are dicing their sabots in the blood- No more sausages or charcuterie for me-. The head has already been sold to another enterprising "yahoo", future tete de veaux a la vinaigrette for somebody! This is truly an economical country. Nothing is lost here, except respect, but that does not count when game is afoot. This horse was a sick beast, but, being shot instead of being allowed to die, its carcass has been saved as fit for food. Oh! the devilry and hypocrisy of it all!

There has a good stroke of business somewhere, the skin is worth at least 100 francs, and the creature who bought the corpse of the beast gave 12 francs for it! It is fortunate that the horse is solidly built for at times it trembles as if it must fall in. There is scarcely a moment's respite from some violation but there are moments when the trembling is so intense that glasses, and liquids, upon the table seem to join in the ghastly Dance of Death. On the piano behind me there is a devilish broken string, which on certain occasions seems to find sympathy in the din around, and makes an audible plaintive response. I must remove that string or it will end up by alluring me in to self-destruction through its means.

More and more "man slayers"! Still they come on, in hordes, there seems to be no end to them. How many will ever see the Fatherland again?

What a Devil's Carnival it all is! What rout and riot of brutal ogre!

"The profession of Arms is the most noble and honourable"! This I was told when a child, even in England. To destroy then, is more glorious than to create. If such is the case, then the Devil must be once more in power. Woe then to the poor Pilgrims who believe otherwise.

Poor "Ouida" the champion of animal, especially dogs, were she still alive and here would find much material for new and sturdy invective against Man and his cruelty, not only to his like, but to his trustworthy helpmates, the dogs and the horses. The spur appears to be the intermediary of communication between the man and his horse. When I was a youth, my master Bohm made a group of a man mastering a horse. The horse was a magnificent specimen of a Clydesdale stallion and the man a wretched example of degraded, ignorant drink besotted humanity. The Title of the work "The Horse and his Master"!!!

3 o'clock

News! News! News! at last, may it be true, it is almost too good to believe. The English are reported to be at Maldeghem! 1500 have been slain of the enemy near Dunkerque and numbers drowned in a sudden of inundation the surrounding country. The English have risen as it were from the earth, like the soldiers who arose from the plains sown with the Dragons' teeth in the old myth. No-one seemed to know of the whereabouts of the British. Now I understand the increased movement of German troops and the appearances of retreat, but from where have the British made their apparition? If the news be true and the British and French are in any number, there must ensue a great battle even at our very gates and should

fortune favour the Allies a great disaster must follow for the Germans, for they will be surrounded. I hear here there is a whole Army Corps here, and roundabout, but this I can scarcely credit. In any case the numbers of all arms is enormous. The hospitals and schools are said to be full of wounded. It is said that wagons are busily engaged in moving those who are capable of removal, and that each night of late this has been going on. Hence the continual rumble of heavy traffic during the night.

All this time, I have been relating what has passed under my own observation, but although I am witnessing the movement of troops from my house in a main street, which seems formidable enough, I assume that a similar movement is taking place along all the main streets of the town which lead a north easterly direction. It is in this direction that reports announce the presence of the English. It is to be hoped that artillery and Highland troops are there with their bayonettes ready, for the bayonette seems to be the pet aversion of our enemies. Where are the Belgians? What a time of tension it is! Now despondency, now hope, then again discouragement once more to give place to renewed hope. In the absence of reliable information, one watches at the window, searching the countenance of each passing soldier to gather some sort of inkling of news, either good or bad. The suspense is at such tension that one can hardly govern one's movements. Is there to be burning and wholesale pillage? Is there to be fighting in the streets? How about the women and children? How about one's own carcass?

A tram is passing, so all is well between here and the station. Soldiers are getting fewer and fewer, the trumpeting of the horns of automobiles more frequent and their speed more accelerated, all now from the same direction. Is it the beginning of a great rout? Does it mean that at last we are to be relieved?

An officer has just galloped past, followed closely by his orderly, in that direction of [St] Croix . I hope the direction may be a good augury for him and his servant, as I hope the gallop may develop into a stampede, with the devil close at their heels and hell and fire open to receive them, and all belonging to them, that we may be spared the dire necessity of burying and cremating after the great calamity.

4pm

Night is falling in, and at this hour, as a rule, there has been far greater evidence of promenading soldiers on leave than there is at present. Something is afoot. The trams are running but mostly empty. Why are they plying at all, I can't imagine. I hear that the "Vicinal" is bringing in wounded and worn out troops, and that there is a service in work between here and Ostend, for troops only. Crowds of men, women and children, with their backs on their backs, are passing continually. These are, I suppose, the folk who some days ago fled, panic stricken and are now returning.

There is an automobile with a shocking foghorn attached, constantly flying backwards and forwards carrying superior officers. During the last few hours it has been unusually active. A

tram has just passed full of soldiers. I could not distinguish their rank, as the tram sped past at an unusual speed. All this great hurry and haste in this direction is a relief to my anxiety for your son Louis, and the Moelstrom and for the safety of the Nursery. It has been impossible to get to them, but from news brought to me. I have been assured that all is quiet in their direction, the great traffic being upon the upper or St Andre road. I am nevertheless chafing under my forced imprisonment, and tomorrow, panic or no panic. I mean to suit my own conscience, since I have become aware that those who pray me to stay at home to protect them while they smell danger, are not proof against their own vulgar curiosity, the moment favourable to its satisfaction presents itself, and then, without even coming to consult me. I am tired of being made a fool of, especially by such abject creatures as are these Brugeois. Tomorrow then out I go and towards St Andre. I will not be fooled any more. I have seen something of life in many countries, but I have never encountered such absolute selfishness, greed and ignorance as it has been my lot to experience here in Bruges, and for the matter of that in Belgium all over.. It was something of a shock to me when the four young able-bodied men, who I have practically brought up, deserted at an hour of danger, yet I ought to have been prepared for it. I trusted, and I have found my reward. I am too old at sixty to change my entire mode of life, but I am not too old to modify it considerably from this day forth. The prospect of the life of the cynic is not encouraging, but alas! I have little better to look forward to. I have been an optimist all my life, and it is a shock to have to come to pessimism

I have often envied you the loving devotion your sons show to you, and the sweet companionship of your dear wife. I have never known either of blessings, though I have had a long married life, and have brought up thirteen children, without counting the flock in this household. Tate has been against me and I have learnt to accept, and to bow to it,, as a thing inevitable. I am also somewhat of a Fatalist, and it is doubtless this which helps me to bear my lot, with a certain amount of indifference.

My whole life has been made up of strange and varying vicissitudes, which were they all materialised into discs of colour put into a bag, shaken violently, then suddenly thrown out, would give as result a dull grey, like that produced by the whirling of a disc upon which all the colours of the spectrum are spread side-by-side. The wheel of my life is slowing down in its gyration, yet I see no diminution of the grey tone nor any chance of rediscovering the bright colours it was once painted with. Grey, after all, is a famous neutral background for any bright spot, and it has the advantage of being less easily soiled, or rather of showing any defiling stain. So I am content with grey as the colouring for my future existence.

The fact that I have allowed myself this slight digression will assure you that nothing of importance has happened within the past hour and a half. My window even, has become a place of boredom, my studio untenable, on account of constant interruption and, in short, it is only my pen now that is left to me, as a relief to talk through it to you, my sympathetic and kind friend.

I have all my life hated the exercise of writing, but during the past few days it has come to me as a joy, to be able to jot down my passing thoughts, indeed has been quite a solace in my loneliness. I dread, however, think the trouble my pleasure will cause you. I only hope you may be spared some at least, by the help of the young eyes about you, who may be courageous, and patient enough to decipher my hieroglyphics. I fear my writing is nothing else but a series of them. It is now night, and I shall try to court the kind favour of the God of Sleep, for I shall be glad to close the "windows of my eyes" and enjoy oblivion for at least a few hours.