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THE 21ST JULY

WHEN we got back to Brussels from the front it was to learn that the latest rumour had it that Villalobar and I had been arrested by the Germans and whirled away in motors, no one knew where. Perhaps the rumour in some of its forms related the event to the Belgian national holiday which the Belgians had been celebrating that day—celebrating it as well as they could, considering the disabilities under which they lived. We had celebrated our own national holiday a little more than a fortnight before, and the Belgians had added to the meaning of the day by their felicitations. It had been an excessively hot day, as the Fourth of July should be, and its celebration had made a little oasis of liberty in a desert where liberty just then was unknown. I had decided against a reception or manifestation of any sort as, under the circumstances, in bad taste. But we had raised a new flag, the old having been whipped out by the winds and, as one might almost say, by the emotions of those long months; and as the lovely emblem rose and fell in the heavy, humid air and the sunlight touched its bright colours, it had seemed never so beautiful, never so full of meaning. The Belgians, as I said, had silently celebrated the day with us. There was a telegram from Davignon, on the part of the Belgian Government at Havre.¹

¹ The telegram from Davignon, Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs: