

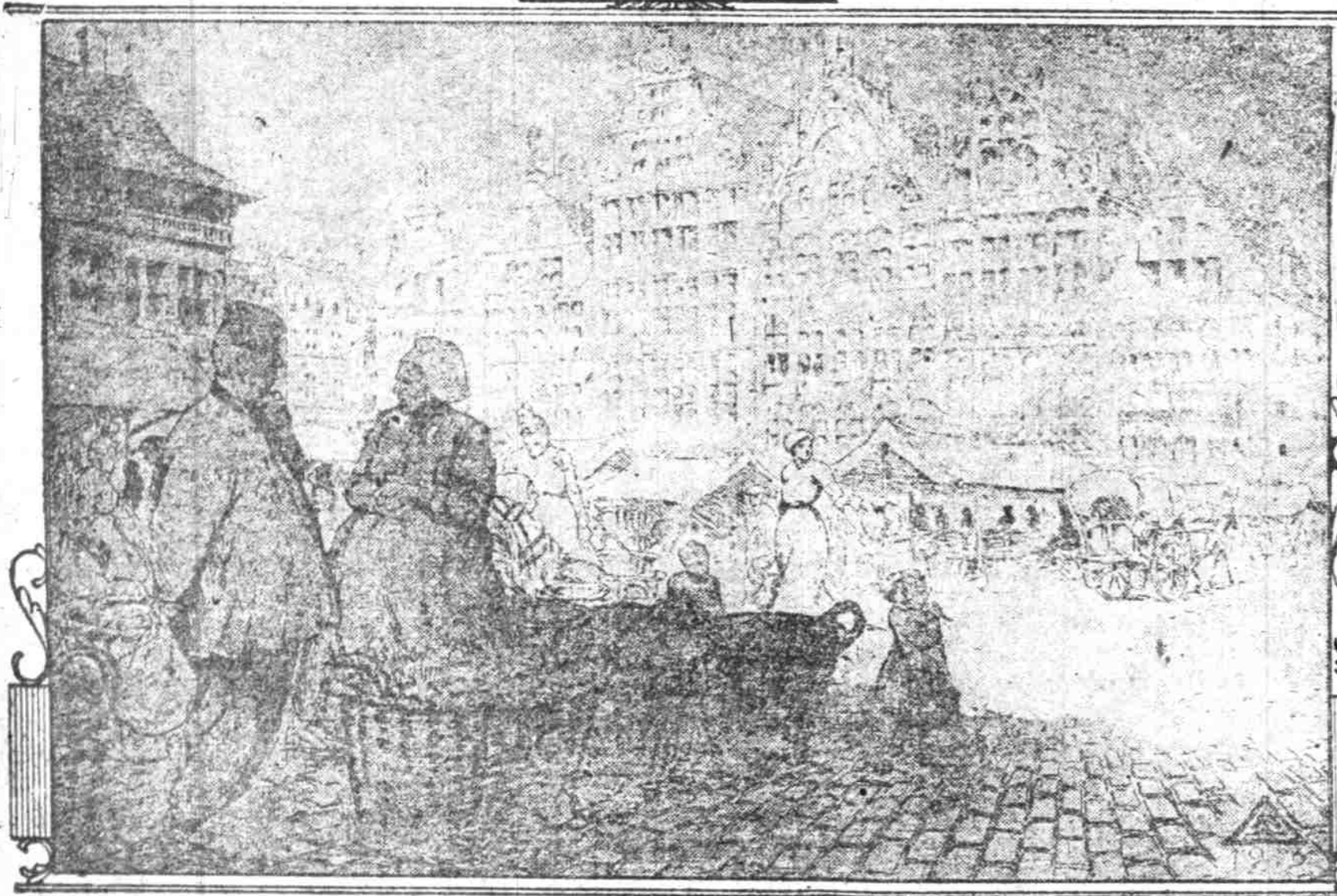
PORTLAND, OREGON, SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 6, 1914.

BRAVED ANTWERP BOMBARDMENT TO SAVE PICTURES

William A. Sherwood, an American Artist, Hid in a Cellar Until the City Fell and Then Escaped with His Paintings to the United States.



William A. Sherwood



The Great Square on market day Photos by Underwood and Underwood



From an Antwerp Courtyard

NEW YORK:—It was the determination to save his pictures that first held William A. Sherwood, an American artist, whose home has been for 10 years in Belgium, in the besieged city of Antwerp during the bombardment and for 10 days after the Germans entered the town, and then forced him and his wife, refugees in a peasant cart, to seek shelter with the other exiles beyond the Dutch frontier.

Bringing most of their paintings and etchings with them, and carrying to American safety a tiny walf of a Belgian dog, Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood arrived a few days ago in New York. For 36 hours without sleep and with the most meagre supply of food and water, they hid in the darkness of a cellar in a deserted street while the German guns battered down Antwerp's defenses.

For 10 days more they lived in the forsaken city, helping as they could to care for the wounded and put out the fires from bombs and making unceasing efforts to get a cart to take them and their work over the border line. The journey to the Dutch frontier, ordinarily a matter of 40 minutes by train, occupied the best part of a day in their peasant cart and they spent one night on the floor of a railway station in an abandoned Belgian hamlet.

When they reached Holland they were cared for, along with 600 other refugees by a factory owner who was sheltering and feeding these exiles almost entirely at his own expense. And the sight of seven floating mines as their boat made its way from the coast line of Europe offered their last adventure from the war. Mr. Sherwood has brought back a record of war happenings and a few etchings of war scenes.

Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood have lived for years on the Rue Rembrandt in Antwerp spending their summers at Dixmude and Nieuport and Bruges and along the banks of the Yser and making their home among the Belgian people. With the exception of one other family, Flemish friends of theirs, they were the only people who remained on the Rue Rembrandt during the siege. The two families took shelter together in the cellar of Mr. Sherwood's house, while the rest of the street was deserted.

At Liege Just Before Siege. "I should never have stayed in the city during the bombardment, of course," said Mr. Sherwood, "if it had not been for the pictures. I was trying to get a cart or something to get them out of the city, and before I could succeed in finding any means of transportation at all the Germans came. Then, too, I was hoping to be able to get some money in Antwerp, and I wanted, if possible, to wait for that. Of course I never did get it. I had fortunately, a little on hand, and I couldn't get any more until we reached

Rotterdam. I soon ceased to think of waiting for money. Just as soon as we could get our cart we left. But that was 10 days after the siege.

"I was in Liege when the siege began," he explained, "but I left immediately, was able to get out without any trouble, and had no adventure at all. I thought at that time, as every one did, that to go to Antwerp was to take myself and my pictures to an absolute refuge. No one believed that Antwerp could fall. However, I did not want to keep Mrs. Sherwood in Belgium in war time, and we began at once to make preparations to get my pictures away. We found we couldn't. I had had some pictures in the Marche Soulier, and was fortunate enough to get them out and in my cellar before the siege. The Marche was burned.

"So, when the bombardment began, we hid in the cellar, like every one else who stayed. Our neighbors stayed with us an old man, his three grownup daughters, and two small children. There was no electricity, gas, or water in the city. We had managed to store some water, of course, and we had a little food—not much. Fortunately, there was wine in the cellar, and that helped us out."

Soon Got Used to Shells.

"We had packed what we could in suitcases, ready to leave everything else and run if the house was struck and burned. But as a matter of fact we soon learned when we did leave Antwerp how useless our packing would have been if we had fled. The refugees fleeing from the siege had to go, for the most part, afoot. They couldn't carry so much as handbags very far.

"At first the bombardment was terrific, of course. But after a few hours we found that we were getting used to it. And soon we discovered—before the end of the first 12 hours—that we could calculate approximately the distances of the firing range and make a pretty good guess as to whether or not we were in danger.

"At those times Mrs. Sherwood used to run upstairs and wash, when it seemed reasonably safe. It didn't seem to me that a bath was worth so much danger, and I told her she was foolish, but she would do it. Then once, on the last day of the siege, I ventured out in the street when the guns seemed fairly far away.

"You see," he went on, "the fire of the guns would sweep the city in one direction, and then sweep back in a little closer circle, and then back again in a sort of zigzag. We could hear them coming and going, and that is how we could guess how near the danger was, from the strength of the noise they made. On the other hand, there were the two Zeppelins dropping bombs pretty constantly. By the second night we were almost worn out—sheer physical fatigue.

"On the last day I felt it necessary to make an effort to see the consul, so I took what seemed to be a good moment and went out in the street. I walked for about 15 city blocks along the Chaussee de Malines, one of the busiest streets in the city and the one along which the Belgian army had retreated. It was the worst of the besieged part of the city, a ruined



Antwerp Fishmongers.

and deserted thoroughfare. And in those 15 blocks I saw two persons—one a Belgian soldier who was demented because of the horror he had gone through, and who was leading his horse up and down the city street with apparently no real idea of what was going on, and the other a Flemish gardener, who was ignoring siege guns and Zeppelins and gazing with a sort of stolid interest at the damaged trees along the roadway. For the rest it was like a city of the dead. When I got to the consulate I was dismayed to find that our American consul had gone. Later I found the Swedish and Haitian consuls, and I understood that both the Swiss and Spanish consuls stayed. But almost every one had left Antwerp.

"Of course, we were constantly expecting our house to be hit by a shell. Shells were falling around us all the time.—Finally, at about 3:15 in the morning, toward the end of the bombardment, there was a crash and the house rocked like an earthquake, but did not fall. Afterward we found the shell in the garden. It had just missed the house. It was two meters in circumference and it made a hole one meter deep. I brought home some of the pieces of it. I'm going to give one to my mother for a paper-weight.

"During those hours of the siege we could not find out anything at all about how things were going or whether the city was holding out at all. When one of us would venture out, it was only to see the empty

houses, some burning, some destroyed, some untouched but simply deserted, the offices with the people gone, the streets tenanted only by the dogs and cats that the refugees had left in their flight. No one knew anything. No one could find out anything. The only thing we could do was to creep back to our cellar in the dark and wait. Of course, sleep was impossible. We stayed there and talked when we could, and tried to cheer each other up, and listened to the noises. And as I said, we got curiously used to it. "Then it stopped. And after a while we stuck our heads out, so to speak, again. I left Mrs. Sherwood in the house and went out into the street for a little while, and it happened that I saw the German army entering the city. There were 300,000 soldiers, but only half that number actually entered the city, and were reviewed before the palace.

Parade for Cats and Dogs.

"The advance guard had stuck flowers in their uniforms, and some had succeeded in covering themselves with garlands. They marched in with every evidence of a gala event, with the flowers to show their triumph. It was the most awe inspiring thing I ever saw. But the most awe inspiring feature was that practically only the lost dogs and cats were there to see the triumphant entry. There were so few human beings left in Antwerp. The conquering army marched into a dead city. Their advance was like the movement of an immense machine. The German army does not seem human.

"After the Germans came, there

isn't much to tell. Things were quiet. Almost all the Antwerp people had gone. The banks, offices, and most shops were closed. There were no more Zeppelins, of course—and there had been the machines hovering over us and dropping bombs, as of course everyone knows, for days before the bombardment. We came out of our cellars and our friends went back to their own houses. The city, however, seemed peopled only by soldiers.

Belgians Reluctant to Leave.

"I spent almost all my own time in trying to get a cart to take us and the pictures to Holland, but Mrs. Sherwood did what she could in the city and joined with the sisters in a bucket brigade, with what little water they could get, to fight the fires. Of course, there was comparatively little damage in Antwerp. Of all the besieged towns it suffered least. The cathedral and the Musee Plantin were almost unharmed; the Rubens pictures had long since been sent away to safety, of course."

With mention of Mrs. Sherwood's assistance to the nuns and the nurses in the city, and with a quick summing up of his own difficulty in finding a cart, the artist's story passes quite briefly over the 10 days after the bombardment. Of five butcher shops in his neighborhood only one, he said, was open.

"It was very quiet," he repeated. "Strangely enough, among the few Flemish families that had braved the siege there was a curious reluctance to leave when it was over. The Belgian bourgeoisie is loath to give up its home. Most of the people fled in the first terror of the Germans' approach. The few who stuck out through the bombardment settled down when the

Belgians came in into a kind of regular life—although I don't know how much longer the food can last. Our neighbors of the Rue Rembrandt refused to leave with us, and Mrs. Sherwood and I, with the stray dog that we had picked up, departed alone. But we could not have stayed. That deserted city was dreadful.

"We had to have three special papers. One ordinary passport and identification card, one special 'Permis de sejour,' issued before the bombardment, dated September 23, mine is, and one card from the German army of occupation, permitting us to leave the city and pass through the German lines. We had no trouble in getting that, or in making our departure, once we had our cart. It is rather interesting to note, though, that for the hire of the peasant cart and two slow Flemish horses and a man to drive us to the frontier, we had to pay a sum that practically equaled the price of the horses and cart in ordinary times!

"But the German sentries stopped us as we were leaving, on account of the pictures. We had them in three large packing cases, 35 paintings. And, of course, we had our luggage, with etchings and sketches in that. But it was the packing boxes that stopped us. There was a quick discharge of guns and our man stopped, and out ran a sentry to demand an explanation. Were those pictures, or were they rifles? He insisted that they looked like rifle cases. We thought we would have to stop and unpack everything and have a thorough examination then and there, but our papers proved so complete and so official that the soldiers accepted them and let us go. We were rather startled by the guns, but we noticed that our stolid Flemish driver never turned a hair. He didn't so much as start at the noise of the shot.

On the Dutch Frontier.

"Our trip to the frontier was uneventful. We passed many soldiers and sentries, saw a few other refugees,

caught hints of the deserted villages that we had known as prosperous little hamlets before the war. But nothing happened to us. When night came we drew up at a railway station and spent the night in the waiting room. Altogether the trip took nine hours from Antwerp to Burgen-ap-Zoom, on the Dutch side, just across the frontier. We had only a few sandwiches to supply us with dinner at night and breakfast in the morning, and one bottle of wine. But, unfortunately, after we had opened the bottle and taken some of its contents and set it down on the station floor where we were camping, I upset it. That was a sad loss, for we needed it. We were pretty hungry as well as tired when we got to the border line.

"And there was a strange sight. I had heard of it, of course, but had not realized how it would look. Drawn up along the frontier were the German soldiers—we had passed German soldiers everywhere, of course—and facing them, not two meters away, on the other side of the border line, were the Dutch guards.

Holland's Splendid Work.

Burgen-ap-Zoom is a small manufacturing town of 16,000 inhabitants, just over the line that separates Holland from Belgium. It is caring for 65,000 refugees, and, like the rest of Holland, Mr. Sherwood points out, faces famine as the price of its generosity.

"I cannot say enough about the splendid people of Holland," the artist declared. "They are doing the most wonderful work that can be imagined. And they need help. I am convinced that the first thing we ought to do is send food, flour, to Holland. She needs foodstuffs. England cannot help her because England is fighting and Holland is neutral. We must, because we are neutral and able to help.

"Mrs. Sherwood and I were cared for, with our pictures and our dog, in the family of a manufacturer of the town," he went on. "As I said, we had money enough to pay our way. But this man, who took us into his house, was keeping 600 Belgians practically at his own expense. He has them sleeping between the machines in his factory and he is feeding and caring for them. He is M. Emile Perguy, head of one of the industries of South Holland, and he is one of the splendid men who are doing such wonderful things now.

"I have heard a German quoted as saying that the Belgian refugees do not want to return to their homes and go back to work," Mr. Sherwood continued with some emphasis. "I want to say that I know that to be false. I know the Belgians. I have lived with them for more than 10 years, in the cities and among the peasants in the country districts, and I was among the refugees. There are no more industrious people anywhere. They yearn to return to their homes. I have heard, too, what has been said of alleged Belgian cruelties, and I want to add that I know the Belgians' gentleness and consideration. I have known of one instance after another of their real thoughtfulness and kindness, their gentleness to women and to people in distress. I do not believe these tales of so-called cruelties on the part of the Belgians."